A COMMENT
Upon the
Two Tales
OF OUR
ANCIENT, RENOVVNED,
and EVER-LIVING POET
Sr *JEFFRAY CHAVCER*, Knight.
Who,
For his Rich Fancy, Pregnant Invention, and Present Composure, deserved the Countenance of a PRINCE, and his Laureat Honour.

The *MILLER'S TALE*,
AND
The *WIFE* of *BATH*.

Addressed and Published by Special Authority.

LONDON, Printed by *W. Godbid*, and are to be Sold by *Robert Clavell* at the *Stags-Head* in *Ivy-lane*. 1665.

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A CONTINENT

Upon the

Two Tales

OF OUR

Ancient, Renowned,

and Ever-Living POET

SIR JEFFRAY CHAUCER, Knight.

Who,

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AND

The WIFE of BATH.

Addressed and Published by Special Authority.

LONDON, Printed by W. G. for A. and J. and are to be Sold by Robert [illegible] Head-Gate. 1687.

TO THE HIGHLY HONOURED,
AND NOBLY ACCOMPLISHED,

Sr JOHN WINTOUR,

SECRETARY OF STATE
TO HER SACRED MAJESTY,

THE QUEEN MOTHER;

A LOYAL SUBJECT
TO HIS SOVEREIGN,
A FAITHFUL SERVANT
TO HIS COUNTREY,
A RESOLUTE SUFFERER
FOR BOTH;

R. B.

HIS MOST DEVOTIONAL SERVITEURE
PRESENTS THESE *ILLUSTRATIONS,*
PRIMARILY INTENDED,
&
PURPOSELY PUBLISHED,
FOR ENTERTAINMENT
OF *RETIRED HOURS.*

Wm 7259

This *Comment* was an *Assay*, whereto the *Author* was importun'd by Persons of Quality, to compleat with Brief, Pithy, and Proper Illustrations, Suitable to such Subjects.

A Commentary upon Chaucer's *Prologue to his* Millers Tale.

When that the Knight, &c.

Our Famous and ever-living *Chaucer*, having in his *Knight's Tale* expreſſed the ſweet Comical paſſages of conſtant Love, covertly ſhadowed under the perſons of *Palamon* and *Arcite* Corrivals in their Love to *Emely*: Our merry Hoſt, infinitely delighted with the Pleaſure of that Story, deſires to have theſe Tales continued, as the Task was at firſt by him contrived.

Unbokled is the male, &c.

A familiar and proper kind of Speech, implying how their Wits being now ſet awork, and the Male of their Conceits *unbokled*,

L.

none ſhould be ſo unſociably retired, as to ingroſs his Conceits to himſelf, and not have them diſcovered.

Now telleth Sir Monke, &c.

He gives the Monk pre-eminence; but the drunken Miller admits of no ſuch precedence: his Drink frees him from all Monaſtick reverence.

But in Pilates voice he began to crie,
And ſwoze, &c.

Here he deſcribes to life the humor of a Drunkard; Fearful Oaths are ever the overflows of full Pots.

Our hoſt ſaw that he was dronken of ale
And ſaid, abide Robin leve brother,

A pleaſant conteſt betwixt our Hoſt and the Miller; whom he firſt mildly labours to perſwade, but when no reaſon will prevail, he concludes,

—— Tell on a devil way
Thou art a fool, thy wit is overcome.

Wherein the Hoſt diſcovers his anger, and in a paſſionate manner gives way to his humor.

Now

Now herketh qd. the Miller, all and some,
But first I make a protestacion
That I am dronke, &c.

The Miller makes strong Liquor his Apology, purposely to procure more attention, and incur less offence: For true was his observation in Assayes of this nature:

In telling tales, unless the truth we smother,
In pleasing one, we may displease another.

Right cautious are we then to be of the nature and humor of the hearer, and to peruse him, before we disclose our selves unto him.

——If I mispeake or say
Wite it the Ale of Southwarke, I you pray

Like a true Ale-stake, he tels you where the best Ale is; and this was made good long ago, as may appear by that overworn Proverb,

The nappy strong Ale of Southwirke
Keeps many a Gossip fra the Kirke.

He proceeds to the Argument of his Tale, in these words,

For I woll tell a Legende and a Life
Both of a Carpenter and his wife &c.

This is the Subject which must give life to his Tale: But entring into more free discourse of the Lightness of the Carpenter's Wife, and the Carpenter's disgrace, he is interrupted by the Reve in these words,

The Reve answered and said stint thy clap, &c.

This Reve being of the same Profession, cannot endure to hear a Carpenter defam'd upon any condition. He taxeth him for laying such infamy on mens Wives.

Whose spotless Honour is their highest treasure,

And whose good name once lost, is lost for ever.

This dronken Miller spake ful sone agen
And said, leve brother Oswold,
Who hath no wife is no Cockold.

He proves that the Husband's **Crest** is in his Wifes **Curtsie**; and to allay his fury, he confesseth freely that there are many good Wives, amongst which, the Reve's Wife

Wife may be one, for ought he knows of.

To demen of my self that I am one,
I woll beleve that I am none.

This agrees well with that Tenet, which applied seasonably, may afford a soveraign Receipt to Jealousie: It is better to be one, and think him none, than to be none, and think him one. The old Bard could sing as much:

More blith that Cockold looks, who thinks him none,
Than he who ne're was one, yet thinks him one.

In husband should not be inquisitive
Of Goddes privete, ne of his wife.

An excellent Rule of direction, including a twofold Precept. First, Not to pry too curiously into the secret Cabinet of God's Divine Will. Secondly, Not to be too jealously inquisitive after the Actions of his Wife. For the former, as it is an Argument of too daring presumption; so the later, of weakness and indiscretion.

What should I more say, but this Miller
He nolde his word for no man forbere, &c.

Here our ingenious *Chaucer* displays the Frontless boldness of a Rustick. On he will go with his Tale in spite of all opposition. In the end, our Poet, out of a native and free-bred Modesty, as one doubtful, lest some passages might offend the chast ear of a modest hearer, he directs him to other historical Tales, plenteously stored with singular Precepts of Morality; which, together with his own Apology, he expresseth in these Lines, and so weaves up his Prologue.

——Whoso list it not to here
Tourne over the leve, and chose another Tale.

A Com-

A Comment upon the Miller's Tale.

Whilom there was dwelling in Oxenford A riche gnofe, &c.

It giveth no leſs life than probable light to any Story, to make mention of the Place, Perſon, Profeſſion, with other Circumſtances concurring. This induced our Poet here, as elſewhere throughout all his Tales, to expreſs ſuch a place where his Scene is formed, ſuch perſons to whoſe condition his Diſcourſe is fitted, with all ſuch paſſages, by which the conceipt of the Reader might become artfully entangled, his expectance pleaſantly deceived, and the Plot at which he aimed, and by which he

he was directed, cunningly closed. You are to observe then, that the Scene here, is laid in *Oxford*; in which Shire, our Poet was born and educated, and by *Rich.*2. with the Mannor of *Newholme*, in the same County endowed.

A rich gnose.

A rich grub, or miserable Caitiff, as I render it; which interpretation, to be proper and significant, I gather by the sence of that antient Metre,

The Catiff Gnof *sed to his Crue,*
My Meney is many, my incomes but few.

This, as I conceive, explains the Author's meaning; which seems no less seconded by that antient *English* Bard.

That Gnof, *that Grub, of Pesants blude,*
Had store of Goud, yet did no gude.

Howsoever, we are to suppose him to be a Lodger or Tabler of Scholars and other Artists, for their Chamber and weekly Commons; as he sheweth after.

With him there was dwelling a pore Scholer.

This **Pore**, hath been an Epithete (I seems)

ſeems) for Scholars in all Ages; but eſpecially for Aſtrologers, of which profeſſion this Scholar was, who ſpend ſo much time upon Experiments and Concluſions, and make ſuch a pudder about **Jacobs Staff**, as they never leave, till they get a Scrip to't, and ſo make up a beggarly concluſion.

If that men asken him in certain houres
When the men should have drought or shoures.

He profeſſed certain (but moſt uncertain) conjectural notions of Weather, and ſo probably he might, having (as may be ſuppoſed) an Almanack in his bones, by the long familiarity he had with his Hoſteſs *Alyſon*, the Carpenter's Wife. Howſoever, it may well appear, that albeit he could judiciouſly prognoſticate of ſeaſons, and by turning of the Weather-cock, gather where the wind was: It was but ill wind to him; for it blew him no good.

A chamber he had in that hoſtelrie,
Alone, withouten any companie,
Full fetously dight, &c.

Here he deſcribes his Chamber and Furniture;

niture; with the privacy he enjoyed, to make his Studies more successfully fortunate, according to that of the Poet,

T' improve their knowledge, those who have desire,
Must learn to leave themselves, and to retire.

Whence we may ground, that retirement is the best means for improvement of knowledge.

And he himself as swete as is the rote
Of Licores, or of any Cete wall.

Here he glanceth wittily at the delicacy or effeminate privacy of this Scholar: From whence he descendeth to the too accurate disposing or shelving of his Books, his Augur stones, with other mysterious Appendices of his seldom practis'd Art. Likewise, to his Press or Wardrobe, where his Cloaths were curiously folded, his Table with Stammel, or some other Carpet, neatly covered, with his Psaltery, or Instrument of Musick hanging at his Bed-head, to give himself and the Family delightful Melody. This he fits with a Song, to make his Musick more compleat, himself more admir'd, and

and his Suit by his Hoſteſs better accepted. Thus ſpun our young Aſtrologer out his time; thus ſpent he his coin, the yearly Penſion which his Friends allow'd him.

This Carpenter had wedded new a wife.

An unequal Marriage; froſty Age and Youth cannot ſuit together. This diſparity in years, begets a diſtraction in their affections: Suſpicious he is of her youth, and no leſs conſcious of his own debility; both which (like ſpeedy harbingers) make ready way for Jealouſie.

He knew not Cato: for his wit was rude, That bad men wed his similitude.

This was not only the advice of *Cato*, but both of *Pittacus*, and that Cynick *Diogenes*, who on a time, being ſollicited by a young man, for his beſt counſel or advice touching his Marriage, willed him to go forth into the ſtreets, where the very Children would direct him in his choice: Like will to like.

Fair

Faire was this yong wife, and therewithall
As any Wiſele her bodie gentle and ſmall.

Here he deſcants on the beauty of this young Bride.

So ſmall her Waſt, as Nature made ſmall waſt.

So ſung our modern Poet, which agrees well with his Deſcription: He compares her body to a Weeſle, of all other creatures, ſmalleſt, ſleakeſt, and ſtraighteſt. After this, he goes to deſcribe her Apparel; which ſuits ſo well with the artleſs curioſity of that time, as every Line finds out one native Ornament to grace and beautifie her Attire. Her **Seint** ſtudded, or Girdle, barred with Silk; her **Barm-cloath**, or Partlet, as white as morrow milk; her embroidered **Smock**, her **Colere** of cole black Silk; the **Tapets** or Taſſels of her white **Volupere**, Gorget or Stomacher, ſuted to the ſame colour; her **fillet** of Silk, and ſet full high.

And ſikerly, ſhe had a likerous eie.

The

The eye is called Love's Dart. A wandring Eye discovers the affection of the heart. It seldom roams abroad, but it either takes, or is taken. What an **Index** is to a Book, is the Eye to the mind.

Full small ipulled were her browes two,
And they were bent, and black as any slo.

The Brow is the Beacon of Fancy. A bent Brow implies a soveraignty or command of Affection. A black brow, constancy of resolution.

She was moch more blisful for to see,
Then is the new Perigenet tree, &c.

Here he sets forth the Amiableness of her person in sundry proper and familiar resemblances; wherein first, he Metonemically compares the cheerfulness of her countenance to the **Peregenet-tree**, for the fruit of that Tree. Secondly, The softness of her Skin, and tenderness of flesh, being that *Euryale* praised in her *Ulysses*, to **Weather-wool**; the Lustre of her complexion to **Danaes Tower**; the clearness of her voice to a **Swallow**; her nimbleness to a **Kid**; the sweetness of her breath to **Ba-**

ket

ket or Methe, or Apples laid in hay; her wantonneſs to a Colt; her goodly proportion and preſence, to a Waſte; her ſtraightneſs, to a Bolt. From theſe, he deſcends to ſuch Ornaments as ſhe uſually wore; which (no doubt) received more grace from her, than ſhe from them. With a Broch as broad as the Boſs of a Buckler, was ſhe adorned; with ſhoes or Sandals laced: In a word, ſhe was a Primroſe, a peerleſs Paragon, a Bigges nye, a Bedfellow for any Lord, a Spouſe for a good Yeoman. All this is ſo fully, freely, and familiarly expreſt by him, as it ſhall need no farther illuſtration.

Now ſir, and eft ſir, ſo bifel the caas
That one day this hend Nicholas
Fell with this young wife to rage & ſpley
While that her huſband was at Oſeney.

Opportunity is the Bay or Port of Fancy; many ſtorms and billows did this amorous Scholar inceſſantly ſuffer; ſundry rubs and oppoſitions did he encounter; before Opportunity wafted him to this long-expected harbour. At Oſeney; an ancient Abbey, diſtant ſcarce half a mile weſt from *Oxford*; ſeated

ſeated in a Vale no leſs fruitful, than delightful, whoſe very Bels were formerly famous, in our old Engliſh Catches. To this **Oſeney** was our Carpenter gone, leaving his Inmate Aſtronomer at home, to turn over his Books, and try whether the Sign were in **Aries** or no. Much water goes by the Mill, which the Miller little knows on; and ſome Chips muſt be cut by the Scholar, which our Carpenter little wots on. To be ſhort, as Fancy cannot endure to be long; Our youthful Boorder boords his amorous Hoſteſs, and that ſo familiarly, as it requires a Curtain, for the love of Modeſty. Paſſionate are his Enter-breaths; affectionate his Proteſts; intimate his Love; deſperate his Life; if he may not enjoy what he ſeems only to love, and without which, he deſires not any longer to live. But relentleſs ſhe ſeems, howſoever ſhe means.

She ſaid, I woll not kiſs thee by my faie,
Why let be, quod ſhe, let be Nicholas,
Or I woll cry out, harrow and alaas, &c.

True is that Maxim;

Follow Love, and ſhe will fly you;
Fly your Love, and ſhe'l come nigh you.

How

How far will ſome young Wenches ſeem from taking, when they are moſt taken? What a weak kind of wreſtling they will uſe? What an eaſie reſiſtance they will make? What a pattering with their Lips, as if they would cry out?

But our experienc'd youths do little fear them,
For if they cry, they'l cry that none may hear them.

But quite another courſe takes this our **Nicholas**; what he cannot win by a violent Aſſault, he hopes to obtain by an eaſie Parley: Nor is he fruſtrate of his hopes, having prevail'd as he expected.

This Nicholas gan mercy for to crie,
And ſpake ſo fair, and profered her ſo faſt
That ſhe her love granted him at laſt.

This argued our Hoſteſs **Alysons** good Nature, who would not be won by violence, but by a more eaſie and affectionate temper. She confirms her ſelf his, and ſwears by **S. Thom. of Kent** (an uſual Oath in thoſe daies) that ſhe will be at his command: Provided, that Opportunity prevent all occaſion of Jealouſie, to which infectious Jaundiſe,

Jaundise her husband was infinitely subject.

May thereof care ye nat, quod Nicholas.

Alyson's consent quickens *Nicholas* conceit: it rests now, that he contrive some plot, that he may with more conveniency branch the Carpenter's Pate. She accords to his device, and gives way to whatsoever he shall work. This, as it was their first amorous encounter, they express their mutual love in Lip-labour, hopeful promises of a succeeding favour: So the Poet observes:

Who knows not, Lips are gates to those that woo?
Which freely ope, grant farther entrance too.

This Curtsie he requites with a pleasant new Tune on his Psaltery. Thus cheers she his Lip with her Kiss, he, her Ear with his Melody.

Than fell it thus, that to the parish Cherch
(Cristis own werkis for to werch)
This good wife went on an holy day;
Her forhede schone, &c.

Here he turns aſide from the former ſubject he had in hand, and enters into another diſcourſe; wherein, he firſt tels you of our Hoſteſs repair to the Church; but in ſo trim and neat a dreſs, as by all probability ſhe reſorts rather to ſee and be ſeen, than hear and be taught; for faſhion, than devotion: Afterwards, he deſcends to ſpeak of the beauteous feature, and curious attire of the Pariſh-Clerk, *Abſolon*.

Now was there of the chirch a pariſh clerke,
The which that was cleped Abſolon,
Croule was his heer, &c.

In this deſcription he glanceth at the pride of the Clergy; ſhewing how vanity began to ſtrut within the Wals of a Monaſtery. For if a poor Pariſh-Clerk muſt be ſo curiouſly dreſſed, as to have his hair curled, and ſo womaniſhly diſheveled, his eyes ſo effeminately pilled, his ſhooes artificially carved, and in all points ſo completely accoutred; what may we think of thoſe, whoſe Revenues were greater, places higher, and whoſe perſons, in the eye of the world, more popular? Such Poets, theſe

corrupter

corrupter times require, to tax our Clergy boldly, where ſuch who ſhould be exemplary Practicers and Profeſſors of humility, become too much Admirers of Apiſh Formality, and too ſerious followers of theſe ſhadows of Vanity.

But ſuch witty Evaſions have ſome of theſe, as I never ſee any of them, but they put me in mind of the pregnant and preſent Anſwer of that *Spruſado* to a *Judge* in this Kingdom, a rigid Cenſor of mens habits; who ſeeing a neat Finical Divine come before him in a Cloak lined through with *Pluſh*, thus encountred him: Sir, *You never read that* Paul *ever went in a Pluſh Cloak. But I read, My Lord*, ſaid he, *that* Paul *left his Cloak at* Troas, *and whether that Cloak was lined through with Pluſh, or no, it is more* (my word) *than either you or I know.*

For to point at ſome of theſe both in *Diet* and *Habit*; in ſtead of *Locuſts* and *Wild Honey*, they muſt (good men) content themſelves with *Lobſters*, *Cramm'd Capons*, and *Coney*; and for *Raiments* of *Camels hair*, *Damask Caſſocks* down to their heels; and for *Leathern Girdles* about their *Loyns*, *Formal Faſhes*, or *Apoſtolical*, *Canoni-*

cal Roſes, to enamour their *Loves*; with *Downie Cuſhions* for their knees, in their rare, ſhort and ſweet *Oriſons* to their Lord: But too tedious are ſuch tasks for fat bellies. We will go on with our Tale.

A merry child he was, ſo God me ſave,
Well coud he let blod, clip, and shave,
In twenty manner coud he trip & daunce.

An excellent deſcription of a Pariſh Clark; it ſeems he was a jovial boy; and leſt his too looſe or irregular converſation might bring him to a deprivation, and ſo exclude him from the benefit of his Profeſſion, he initiates himſelf ſufficiently in other Trades: He can play the Barber-ſurgeon, in caſes of neceſſity; and keep a dancing School to ſhew feats of his activity; he can play the Muſician too, and make Taverns and Tap-houſes reſound with his melody.

This Abſolon, that was joly and gaie,
Goeth with a Cenſer on a Sundaie,
Cenſyng the wives of the parish faire
And many a lovely look on hem he caſt,
And namely on this Carpenters wife, &c.

A fit perſon for ſuch a perſonal employment:

ment: He carries a Cenſer for *Cupid's* Altar. Many Objects he eies; ſundry amiable preſentments he views; yet comparing them with this matchleſs *Alyſon*, he holds them all inferiour beauties below compariſon.

And Abſolon his Geterne had itake
For Paramours he thought for to wake,
And forth he goth jolly and amerous
Till he came to the Carpenters hous.

Long and tedious had this task been to *Abſolon*, had he beſtow'd it upon his devotion. Love's watchful eyes may be properly compared to thoſe three *Heſperian* Siſters; their Portels are never cloſed, but ever vigilant to prevent an intruſive Rival. Now are we to ſuppoſe him mounting the Carpenter's Wall, where, directly under the beauteous *Alyſon's* window, who lay cloſely locked in the unweldy arms of her jealous husband: He chants out ſome amorous Roundelay, to which he tunes his melodious Gittern. Long had he not warbled in this manner, till the Carpenter awakes out of his Leaden ſlumber.

This Carpenter awoke, and heard him sing,
And spake unto his wife, and said anon
What Alyson, heres thou not Absolon, &c.

Hourly fears, daily frights, and inceſſant cares beget broken ſleeps, ſhort reſts, and diſquiet dreams. The Carpenter's head lay on ſo hard a pillow, being, as he thought, ſtuft with horn-ſhavings, as his ſleeps could not be long. He awakes his *Alyſon*, who, perhaps, was awake before he call'd her.

And she answered her husband therewithal,
Yes God wote John, I here it every dele.

Notably did he expreſs the effects of Fancy, who ſung thus;

Th' Effects of pow'rful love, do beſt appear,
When paſſion feeds the Eye, and fils the Ear.

How our *Alyſon's* affection was ſeated, or her ſenſes ſated, might hence be probably gathered: Like a ſecond *Dulcina*, ſhe ſeeming ſlept, but did not ſleep; heard, yet would not hear. A favourable Gloſs would interpret thus: She was loath to diſquiet her diſeaſed husband, or put a

diſ-

diſgrace on this amorous Clark; this (as may be well imagined) begot in her a reſolved ſilence. Nor will *Abſolon*, though he receive ſmall comfort in his ſuit, omit the leaſt opportunity for *Alyſon's* ſake. He wooeth her inceſſantly, walks all the night long conſtantly, kembs his Locks curiouſly, price and prayer intercede for him powerfully, he vows to become her ſervant (in thoſe daies a rare kind of Complement) he quavers in his muſical Aires melodiouſly, he ſends her Pyment, Methe, Wafers, and choiceſt Spices, to win her love with preſents of delicacy, he ſhews her proofs of his Activity, and in Theatral actions perſonates *Herod* in his Majeſty.

But what availeth him, as in this caas
Sho loved ſo, this hende Nicholas
That Abſolon may blow the Bucks horne &c.

All his labour is but in vain; fruitleſs are all theſe tasks; to no purpoſe his late watchings. Theſe are but as if he ſtriv'd to make the Blackamore white: This our Poet confirms with an uſual Proverb in thoſe daies.

Full sooth is this Proverb, it is no lye,
Men say right thus, alway the night flie
Maketh the ferre leafe.

As if he should say, Daily company passeth holiday love. *Absolon* hath too strong a Corrival of *Nicholas*, to prevail in his purchase. Long familiarity strengthened with domestick acquaintance, hath so firmly cemented their affections, as all this trim Clark's Rhetorick cannot dissolve it. Now is it high time for them to address themselves for their project.

And so bifell it on a Saterdaie
This Carpenter was gone to Oseney.

It may seem that he was Carpenter to the Abbey, by his usual resort thither: as sundry other Artificers were constantly retained, and by a yearly Pension tied, to repair any such ruines or decaies, as casually befel in the Abbey.

This Nicholas no lenger would tarie,
But doeth full soft unto his chamber carie
Both meat and drink &c.

Nicholas becomes his own Purveior, and has now betaken himself to his Chamber,

ber, to deviſe ſome plot to deceive the Carpenter, and poſſeſs him of his deareſt Paramour. Private he muſt be; and retired, and as one with an extaſie ſurprized, lie gaping as if he were Planet-ſtruck. Directions to this purpoſe are given to his *Alyſon*, that the Plot may draw on to a fairer concluſion. All *Saturday* *Nicholas* mues himſelf up in his Chamber, where he beſtows the day in his repaſt or repoſe; and ſo continues on in this his pleaſant reſtraint till *Sunday* night: Which long reſtraint of *Nicholas* Liberty, drives our ſimple Carpenter into a marvellous perplexity.

This ſelie Carpenter hath great merveile
Of Nicholas, or what thing might him eile,
And ſaied: I am a drad by S. Thomas
It ſtondeth not aright with Nicholas.

He is now grown as jealous of *Nicholas* life, as he was before of his *Alyſon's* Love. Firſt, By falling into conſideration of Man's frailty, he fears that he died ſuddenly: And this he holds more probable, by recalling to mind a Spectacle of Mortality which he had lately ſeen.

I ſaw

I saw to day a corse born to cherche
That now on monday last I saw him werche.

This confirms him in his fear: Longer he will not debate the matter; forthwith he must be resolv'd what is become of *Nicholas*, of whose safety he becomes so suspicious. One then must be directed, and sent to his Chamber, to see what is acted.

Go up (qd he unto his knave) anone
Cleape at his dore, & knock fast with a stone.

On goes this rude Usher, to observe his Master's command: He cries shrilly, knocks stoutly, presseth him to answer boldly; but *Nicholas*, as one taken with a Fit of Astrology, resolves him with silence. At last, lest he should leave his Master still in suspence, and so procure his displeasure, he seeks about till he finds an hole or passage, where a Cat us'd to creep in; where he pries like a Cat for a Mouse.

Till

Till at the laſt he had of him a ſight,
This Nicholas ſate gaping ever vpright,
As he had keyked on the newe mone.

Here plays *Nicholas* the part of a profound Aſtronomer; and h'as one trick above *Ela*, wherein none of all his fellow-conſorts or Aſtronomical Profeſſants can ever come near him: For he by help of his proſpective glaſs, can diſtinctly and apparently diſcover all the ſtarry Regiment quite through the Roof of his Chamber. Howſoever, doubtleſs he gapes for ſome preferment, or elſe to make an Aſteriſme of his mouth, where ſome Conſtellation or other may certainly fix. This could not chuſe but beget a wonderful amazement in this pitiful Spy.

Adowne he goeth, & tolde his maiſter ſone
In what aray he ſaw this ylke man.

This increaſed the number of his diſtracted fears, as may appear by the ſequel: for preſently upon return of this ſad relation,

This Carpenter to dritten him began
And ſaid: now helpe us ſeynt Frideſwide.

A Saint in thoſe daies uſually invoked, when

when any one was either blasted, bewitched, or by a spirit haunted. Divers are his conceipts of *Nicholas*; sometimes he thinks that his much study hath made him mad; other sometimes, that he labours of some other Malady, & that now he is struck into a dangerous Extasie, which requires some present remedy. Amidst these various doubts and distempered fears, far more wisely than could be well expected from the conceipt of such an Head-piece, he imputes the cause of this distemper to his too curious search or enquiry after Gods Secrets.

I thought aye well how it should be,
Men shoulden not know of Gods privete &c.

This he confirms with a late Accident.

Right so fer'de another clerk with astronomy,
He walked into the fieldes for to pry
Upon the sterre, to wete what should befall,
Till he was in a marlpit yfall.

Columella observes, that man of all other Creatures, hath one Muscle to erect his Eye upward,

upward, whereas others are depreſſed, and haled downward; yet this was not given him to eye that which is concealed from him. We are ſo to admire the Creature, as in it we adore the Creator: We are ſo to beſtow the Eye of our outward man, as we darken not our inward light: For by fixing our Eyes too intentively on Objects of Secrecy, we may juſtly fear, leſt we ſhould be conſumed by the Beams of his Glory. It is a good Leſſon which that Sage ſo ſeriouſly recommended to his Scholars; *Be not wiſe overmuch; leſt ye become ignorant in that which you ſhould know moſt.* But little needed our Carpenter fear the depth of ſtudy in his Aſtronomer. A better courſe therefore he reſolves of; and that is to cudgel him out of his humor, and ſo cure this threatning diſtemper.

Get me a ſtaffe.

Madneſs muſt be cured by Correction, and ſpare Diet. Spare, did the Carpenter think, were *Nicholas*'s Commons; albeit, he had better proviſion in his Knap-ſack, than he knew of. He means therefore to correct his humour on the one ſide with

 Bombaſting,

Bombasting, as the Patient on the other side had practised on himself by Fasting.

He shall out of his studieng, as I gesse,
And to the chamber doze he gan him dresse.

Though *Nicholas* might justly commence an action of forcible Entry against his unruly Host, where he was Farmer, during the Lease of his Chamber; seeing his door raised from the Hasps, his deep studies disturbed, his Astronomical slumber disquieted, and all things topsie-turvy turned, yet would not he budge a foot, but like one made up in Wainscot,

This Nicholas sate as still as any stone,
And ever gaped upward into the eire &c.

This troubles *John* Carpenter more than all the rest; who verily thinks that he is either fallen into despair, and therefore, like a discreet Monitor, puts him in remembrance of some devout meditation, by awaking him from that Lethargy or amazed distraction. Or else, that he is forespoken, or blasted by some ill Spirit, which makes him use his Charm to cure this mischance.

I crouch the from elves, & from luched wights;
Therewith the night spell he said anon rights,
On four halves of the house about,
And on the threshold of the doze without.

Here he repeats the Night-charm used in those daies, when they shut their doors at night, and opened them in the morning: Confirmed by that old Sylvane Charm,

Fawns and Fairies keep away,
While we in these Coverts stay;
Goblins, Elves, of Oberon's *Train,*
Never in these Plains remain,
Till I and my Nymph awake,
And do hence our Journey take,
May the Night-mare never ride us,
Nor a fright by night betide us:
So shall Heav'ns praise sound as clear,
As the shrill voyc'd Chantecleer.

Scarcely could *Nicholas* keep his countenance, when he heard the Carpenter run so glib with his Spels: But having indented with his Face, not to blush, with his Eye, to look up, and his Tongue, to be mute,

mute; with a constant boldness, a fixt amazedness, and a resolved silence, he performs his Plot, that at night he may enjoy his Place.

And at the last this hende Nicholas
Gan for to sike sore, and sain alas,
Shall all this world be lost?

Now is *Nicholas* awak'd out of his Trance, and to the Carpenter's great grief, discovers what he has seen in his Astronomical Dream. Which, at first, his Host seems to slight, wishing him to **think on God.**

This Nicholas answered, fetch me drinke,
And after wol I speke in privete
Of certain things, that toucheth the and me.

Though *Nicholas*'s Vision was moist, his mouth was dry; down goes the Carpenter to quench the Astronomer's thirst; and now returning with a large Quart of mighty Ale, that might compare with **Stingo**, for it would **cut a Feather**, they toss'd the Cannikin lovingly one to another: Which done, and having set the Carpenter by him;

Nicholas

Nicholas begins; yet before he has well entred into his sad Story, the door being first shut, he solemnly swears his Host to keep counsel in a secrecy of such high consequence; for should he discover what he imparted, his light discovery would be throughly revenged.

Nay Christ it forbid for his holy blode,
Qd tho this sely man, I am no blabbe &c.

Now he begins to give better ear to this heavy relation; and vows to be secret, upon any condition.

Now John (qd Nicholas) I woll not lye
I have yfounden in mine Astrologye &c.

A deep red Youth, and such an one as will not stick to belie his knowledge, rather than want Admirers. Amongst those then may he be well numbred, who pretend a familiar knowledge to all the Houses of Heaven, and yet can scarce pay house-rent for their own. See how his Banks overflow! He discovers the time of this dangerous Deluge to a minute. The Rain which fell at *Noah's* Flood, was but an *April* shower to this Inundation: Within one hour

must the whole World be drowned, only those few saved, which by his rare and mysterious Art are preserved. The weakly-credulous Carpenter believes him; having never seen the **Bow** in the **Cloudes**, or never heard for what **Token** of **Covenant** it was given.

Thus shall mankind drenche, and lese her life,
This carpenter answered and said, alas my wife!
And shall she drenche? Alas mine Alysoun &c.

There is nothing perplexeth him so much as the loss of his dear *Alyson*. Pity it were, thinks he, that so prety a Morsel of flesh should go the way of all Fish. So as never till now begins he to provide for his own safety, Wife, and Family.

——Is there no remedy in this caas?

As if he should say, Alas, my learned Guest *Nicholas*, must we be all meat for Haddocks? No remedy? no means of safety? Las, for my self I care not so much; for I have the one foot i'th grave already; I am not

not a man long for this world: But that my *Alyſon*, who is in the very flower and prime of her time, the very Daiſie and Honey-ſuckle of her time, that ſhe ſhould become Provender for a Sea-horſe, or lodge in the Guts of a Whale, it would make any ones heart yern within him, that has any man's blood in him. Beſides, for her Age, ſhe may have many pretty **Chips** when I am gone. O then, good Gueſt *Nicholas*, provide for her ſafety, if not for mine. Who knows not, but if you two can agree, ſhe may be meat for you, when I am Worms-meat. Thus might the poor Carpenter ſeem to have expoſtulated with his learned Aſtronomer; as one deſirous to receive ſome ſmall comfort from this profound Artiſt, which might miniſter a remedy in caſes of ſuch urgent neceſſity: and afford to his *Alyſon* (whom he preferred before all his Family) ſome promiſing hopes of ſafety.

Is there no remedy?
Yes, yes, full good (quoth honde Nicholas)

Now begins he to lay his Lime-twigs more cunningly: He gives the deluded Carpenter directions how to prevent this

imminent danger: He repeats unto him the ſtory of *Noah's* deliverance. Nothing is to be undertaken raſhly, without ſerious advice and deliberation; yet in regard both of the apparency aand imminency of that danger, he adviſeth him to take ſome ſpeedy courſe, that the peril may be ſeaſonably prevented, and their ſafeties procured.

This aſketh haſt, and of an haſty thing
Men may not preche, ne make tarying;
Anon go get us faſt into this inne
A kneding trow, or elſe a kemelin,
For ech of us.

Here muſt the Carpenter be ſent his Errand: He muſt provide Materials for his ſecurity. Though every Tub be to ſtand upon his own bottom, every one muſt not ſtrike on his own Tub. Thus is this Carpenter appointed to become Purveyor againſt this great Deluge. And Love makes all tasks light; for, not the fear of death, but the Love of his dear *Alyſon*, which he preferred before his own life, quickens his wind-gall'd feet, to prevent all occaſion of fear. But this dark and myſterious Artiſt

Nicholas,

Nicholas, adviſeth him withal, that in no caſe he diſcover this ſecreſie, either to his man *Robin*, or his maid *Gille*; for they are barred by name from all hope of ſafety: Neither is it fitting that he ſhould be too inquiſitive touching Gods privacies, touching the preſervation of ſome, and ſubverſion of others. Let it ſuffice him, that theſe means are provided for the deliverance of himſelf and his *Alyſon*.

Go now thy way.

The Troughs now are to be provided, and ſufficiently victualled, with Hatchets to cut them down from the roof where they are to be tied, when the Flood hath once entred. A paſſage too muſt be made for theſe marvellous Barges through the main Wall into the Garden.

Than ſhalt thou ſwim as mery I undertake
As doeth the white ducke after her drake.

A proper and familiar compariſon. Two eſpecial inducements there were which moved this careful Carpenter to addreſs him to his laborious Task: The firſt was, Se-

curity. The Second, Soveraignty.

Light is that Labour which may ſafety bring,
In doubtful acts, fear's an ingenious thing.

That the Carpenter likewiſe aſpired to Soveraignty, might be probably gathered by that comfortable hope of an univerſal Monarchy, which *Nicholas* ſuggeſted to him.

And than we ſhall be Lordes all our life
Of all the worlde, as was Noe and his wife.

This ſets the Carpenter upon his Pantofles; while the Learned Clerk *Nicholas* adviſeth him by all means, that when every one is to enter into their Roof-trough or Kimelyn, none ſpeak one to another, but with a conſtant and reſerved ſilence remain as ſtill as the Night. *John* muſt not ſpeak to his *Alyſon*, nor *Alyſon* to her *John*. Beſides, theſe Kneading Tubs muſt be divided by equal diſtance one from another. Thus is the Plot contrived, and no leſs ſucceſſefully continued. The Carpenter's Credulity promiſeth a fair iſſue to this Torrent of Aſtronomy.

This

This ordinaunce is ſaid, go god the ſpeed,
To morow at night, whan men ben all a ſlepe,
Into our kneding tubbs woll we creep.

Love will creep where it cannot go. Dark and ſtraight is that Crany, through which Love cannot find out a way. By this, you may collect, how the Carpenter hath his Commiſſion ſealed, his Paſport granted, and all things facilitated for ſo terrible an Occurrent.

This ſely carpenter goth forth his way
Full ofte he ſaid alas, and welaway,
And to his wife he told his privete,
And ſhe was ware, and knew it bet than he.

Notwithſtanding his great haſt, he will take ſo much time, as to impart this Secrecy to his deareſt *Alyſon*; who, as ſhe was known to the Plot, conjures him by all thoſe Profeſſions of Love which he had ever vow'd her, to follow the Advice of their Learned Gueſt: She cunningly aggravates all thoſe ſeeming occaſions of Fear, which

wrought ſtrongly enough already on the Carpenter's Imagination, ſo as it little needed any re-impreſſion.

This ſely carpenter beginneth to quake,
Him thinketh verily that he maye ſe
Noes flodde come waltring as the ſee &c.

Such ſtrange effects works a poſſeſſed fear. He conſiders not the improbability of this Relation, but ſeemingly apprehends the preſent approach of this Fanatical Deluge, with all thoſe menacing dangers which accompany it: Yet muſt not this fear foreſlow, but accelerate his diſpatch. The three Tubs are provided, Victuals purveyed, and theſe neceſſary Store-houſes in the Roof reared. Beſides, that all things might be with more ſecrecy carried, *Robin* and *Gylle* are removed, and to *London* upon a ſleeveleſs Errand directed.

And on the mondy, whan it drow to night,
He shette his dooze, without candel light,
And dresed all thing, as it should be
And shortly clomben up all thre.

He had purpoſely fixed ſundry Rings or wooden Pins, by which, as by ſtairs or ſtalks,

ſtalks they might climb into their Tubs: Where, with a conſtant and continued ſilence, they lay cloſely immured; while the Carpenter lay trembling and ſhaking, hourly expecting this fearful Inundation: But *Nicholas* and *Alyſon* ever thirſting and longing for the Carpenter's good reſt, that with the active joyes of Love they might ſeal their Affection. The Carpenter applies himſelf to his Devotion, as if he and all the world were near their diſſolution; But theſe two amorous ſouls pray for nothing more, than his reſt, and their recreation.

The deed ſlepe, for wery beſinette
Fel on this carpenter, right as I geſſe
About curfewe time.

The many employments to which this Carpenter ſtood engaged, had with a various Medley of Cares and Fears ſo overwearied him, that as one now reſolved to ſleep out that ſmall ſcantling of time which is left him, about Cock-crow he bids a ſilent good-night to Learned *Nicholas*, and Lovely *Alyſon*.

Love's

Love's eyes are open, and can take no sleep,
While aged Eyes their Leaden Slumber keep.

Which security gives them opportunity; He snorts not so fast in his Tub, but they hast as fast to leave their Tubs, and go to bed.

And doun of the ladder than stalketh Nicolay.
And Alyson full softe after the spedde,
Without wordes mo, they went to bedde.

As this Feat was by both equally plotted, so are they now in the conclusion mutually pleased. The Carpenter's Age enjoyes more rest than their youth. Let night's sable Curtain enskreen these dark actions. Lust's Palace hath but very few minutes of contenting solace. They may sate Sense for a time, but never satisfie Reason with an inhibited touch. We are now to retire a little from this Discourse, and descend to our love-enthralled *Absolon*, who desires nothing more, and hopes to deserve nothing less, than to enjoy fair *Alyson's* Love: To whom he addresseth his course.

This

This parish clerke, this amarous Absolon
That is for love alway so wo begon!
Upon the monday was at Osenay
With company, him to disporte and play.

If God have his Church, the Devil will have his Chappel; yea and his Chaplain too. *Absalon* repairs to the Abbey of *Osenay*, where he employs the day, not in Devotion, but in a serious inquisition after *John* the Carpenter, and his beloved *Alyson*. Private conference he hath with a Cloysterer, in whose relation he conceives infinite pleasure. For by his means he receives Intelligence of the Carpenter's absence from home: Which opportunity chalkes out a seasonable time for *Absolon's* Jubilee.

Some maner comfort shall I have parfaye
My mouth hath itched all this long daie
That is a signe of kissinge at the leste
All night me mette eke, that I was at a feste
Therefore I will go slepe an hour or tweye
And al the night then will I wake and pleye.

He

He conjectures by the itching of his mouth, that he shall be graced at least with a Kiss; which prediction he found most true, as you shall read in the Tale hereafter. It is most certain, what the Comedian sometimes wittily observed: *We dream by night what we most think of by day.* This youthful Quirister meditated of nothing so much all the day long, as of Kissing Comfits, and luscious Feastings. And these were the Subjects of his Dreams. In the amorous discoursing and discussing whereof, he sets this up for his Rest: He will go sleep an hour or two, that he may more ably turn Night-walker, or more properly, Eavedropper. For *Alyson's* Chamber-window must be his Rendesvouz; where he resolves to sing his Apocryphal Catches.

Whan that the first cocke hath crow anon
Up riste this joly lover Absolon.

He sleeps not his business. And to make himself better accepted, at **poynt-devise** must his Body be attired; his Breath, to cure all rankeness, must be with Cloves, Granates, and Lycorice sweetned; his hair daintily

daintily trimmed and treſſed, under his Tongue a **true-love** Flower couched, to make his Deſigns more auſpicious, himſelf to his Love more gracious. Up to the Carpenter's houſe he hyeth, where he ſtayeth, and ſueth.

What do ye honycombe, ſwete Alyſoun,
My fayre birde, my ſwete ſinamome.

How this dapper youth melts with Love! His amorous Oration is all Honey and Cynamon: He cals her his Honey-comb, and ſhe makes him her Coxcomb. Then he deſcends to ſpeak of that unceſſant anguiſh of mind that he ſuffers. Like a Lamb after his Dam goes he bleating; like a Turtle for his Mate waits he mourning: as a Maid without meat ſits he faſting; yet for all this, like a Calf ſhe diſcards him.

Go fro the window, Jack foole, ſhe ſaid,
As helpe me god, and ſwete ſaint Jame,
I love another, or elſ I were to blame
Well bet than the (by Jeſu) Abſolon
Go forthe thy way, or I will caſt a ſtone.

This ſweet Cynamon Clark is properly rewarded; ſhe vows to ſtone him, quite

contrary

contrary to his expectance. She prefers the Stars before the Quire. Her *Nicholas* she enwreaths and enjoyes; mean time let the poor Quirister chant his humming Catch to the Seven Stars: Let him cool his Toes in Moonshine, while she is rid of him she loaths, and enjoys him she loves. Yet, lest *Absolon* should be numbred among those weak wooers, who relinquish their Suit upon the first repulse, he rears his Battery, though with a more easie sollicitancy, than he did at first.

Alas qd Absolon, and welaway
That true love was ever so yuel bystette
Than wille me, sin it may be no bet &c.

He remembers, it seems, the presage of his itching lips; the height of his amorous Ambition is now confin'd to a Kiss. All his Night-labour is now brought to Lip-labour. Which Suit our beauteous *Alyson*, in meer compassion, rather than any affection to his person, thus answers,

Wilt thou than go thy way therwith qd
she?
Yeertes lemman, qd this Absolon.

Shall

Small favours would not be neglected, becauſe they may be Introductions to higher Curtſies when occaſion is offered. Mean time *Abſolon* prepares his Cynamon mouth for a taſt of an unſavoury Curtſie. He takes his corporal Oath of his conſtant fidelity, and makes *Alyſon's* **Poſterioris** the Book he ſwears by. Whence obſerve, with what intollerable petulancy ſhe jeers the poor Cloyſterer! All this while, you may imagine, *Nicholas* ſlept not; but heard this untoward Dialogue, after his long wiſhed, wooed, and now enjoyed amorous encounter. To whom ſhe imparts her Plot, which he approves, and ſhe effects.

The windowe ſhe undoth, and that in haſte
Have do (qd ſhe) and ſpede the faſt
Let not our neighbours thee eſpy.
This Abſolon gan wipe his mouth full dzie

A civil preparation for an uncivil ſalutation. Now at laſt he perceives how ſomething ever hath ſome ſavour: but ſmall ſweetneſs taſts he in her too low curtſie, under favour.

Whacke he ſterte, and thought it was amiſs.

His Experience had inform'd him ſufficiently in the knowledge of a Woman's Lip: This had not that ſmoothneſs which he expected. Yet (quoth he) I may be deceiv'd. Dame *Alyſon* may have an hair-lip, for ought that I know: While he thus expoſtulated the caſe,

Te he qd ſhe, and clapt the windowe to

Te he, a word of diſgrace, ſcorn, or contempt: She laughs at him after ſhe had galled him: Before ſhe ſhut the window to, had ſhe ſhut her back-door too, *Abſolon* had receiv'd the greater Curtſie, and ſhe expreſt the more Civility. But being thus, not only rejected, but diſgraced;

Abſolon goeth forth a ſoꝛy paas
A berde, a beꝛde, ſaid hende Nicholas.

Nicholas has a fine world on't; his Hoſt is incaged, his Hoſteſs in his arms incloſed, his Corrival diſcarded, and new conceits ariſing, other contents hourly deviſed.

This

This ſely Abſolon herde it every dele
And on his lippe he gan for angre bite
And to himſelfe he ſaid, I ſhall the quite

The Worm will turn again. Poor *Abſolon* thus abuſed, of his ſleep deprived, caſts about in his mind how he may be revenged. He cannot endure to ſit down with this wrong: his Fancy is now changed into a Frenzy; his Love to Revenge. Many had he ſerv'd, yet was he never ſo anſwered; many had he lov'd, yet never ſo rewarded; many had he kiſt, yet never any Lip that ſo reliſhed. His Paſſion in the end works it ſelf into a vertuous compaſſion.

For he was healed of his maladye
Full ofte Paramours he gan dette
And wepe as doth a childe that is ybete.

What rare Effects will the apprehenſion of a conceived diſgrace produce? Firſt, It dictates of revenge; then it begets an inbred hate to the Object before loved, and by whom the diſgrace was occaſioned: After all this, it reſolves into tears, till opportunity be offered, that the intended revenge may be inflicted.

A softe pace he went over the strete
Unto a smith men callen dan Gerveys &c.

Absolon having received such rough entertainment in *Venus* Court, flies for revenge to *Vulcan*'s Forge: Where he beats his Brain intollerably, about the manner of his Revenge. Stronger is his desire, than his conceit; yet becomes that so quickned by passion, as now he assaies to execute, what his doubtful Imagination hath so many several waies projected. His Pate is his Anvile, the Forge his Study; so as, I may properly apply those antient Verses, upon this occasion, to our Truant Chantery-man.

That Scholar well deserves a Widdie,
Who makes his Study of a Smiddie.

Well; Suppose him now cooling his Toes at the Blacksmith's door, as he had done before to his dainty Paramour. Thus flies he for refuge to this Lemnian, to be revenged on his Lemman: True it is;

When Vulcan *and the Muses meet,*
Safely may Mars *warm* Venus *Feet.*

But secure is *Gervase* of any such Overture.

This

This Absolon knocketh all easily
And said unto Gervase &c.

He knocks easily, lest he should be discovered, and consequently his plotted Revenge defeated; or else, that he should not for a Night-walker be publickly noted.

What who art thou?

Snug the Smith, it seems, was at work; or else of a light sleep.

It am I Absolon.

This he utters softly through a Cranny, lest it should come to discovery.

What Absalon,
——Sum gay gyrle god it wote
Hath brought you thus.

It seems this Chanterer was a notable Tarrier; and generally observed for an inordinate walker. But little cares *Absolon* for this aspersion: **He had more Cow on his Dillalle.** His head was otherwise employed; his Brain otherwise exercised. Revenge was his deareſt Minion, which he preferred before the Embrace of a Wanton.

—Frend so dere
The hote cultre, in the chymney here
As leve it me,

The Smith of antient acquaintance, would be loath to deny him so ordinary a Curtsie: were it of Gold, or Nobles in a Bag, he would lend it him: Albeit, he wonders what employment he may have for it at so unseasonable a time; but he receives it, upon promise to return it, with relation next morning how he did employ it.

And caught the culter by the cold stele
Full softe out at the doze gan he stele.

Now he renews his siege with Fire and Faggot: Up to the **Carpenter's wall** he mounteth, and at *Alyson's* window he knocketh. She, who lay waking, as one fearful of her own security, or doubtful of her Husband's Jealousie, or over-joy'd with *Nicholas's* sweet Company, answers him presently, but timerously, as if he were some Thief; while he, to free her from that suspition, and make better way to his intended revenge, shapes her this Reply.

I am

I am thyn Absolon, thyn own derling
Of golde (qd he) I have the brought a ring.

A modern Poet sometimes Sung:

There's nought a young man can devise,
Will tempt a Woman more than prize.

Upon which grounds builds he his project; He tenders her a Ring which his own Mother (*Eris* Mother of Revenge) bequeathed him, and that curiously Engraven, and this will he give, so far he seems surpriz'd with love for one poor kiss. *Nicholas* is risen, and he will have it, and as uncivilly requite him for it. For, thought he, shall mine Hostess exceed me in conceit? she put a palpable disgrace upon him, and I will do the like.

And ope the windowe did he hastily &c.

Here our Astronomer lyes his Level, and dischargeth his shot with a powder; while our Chanterer is prepared with his red hot Cultre.

And he was redy with his yron hote
And Nicholas in the arse he smote.

He has got a Ring with a witness. Lust must ever have a rue rub. He who even now, so lasciviously wantonned, and so freely tasted delights prohibited; he who surfetted in pleasures, and had hung up his abused Host for a Scare-crow, see how he is scarrified!

Of goeth the skin an hondbrede about
The hotte cultor brende so his toute.

Here's a Plaister for his pleasure. He that tasts the Sweet, must have the Sowr we'te. He rageth, raveth, and roareth like another *Oetean Hercules*. He can rest in no place, so sharp is his Inflammation; he can repose in no place, so deep is his Incision; So small is the Solace he now conceives in his *Alyson*.

Helpe, water, water, for goddes hert.
This carpenter out of his slumber sterte.

What this deep Soothsayer prediction'd before in jest, he now cals for in earnest. Little dream'd he, when he foretold of that general

general inundation, that he should stand in need of some of it to cool his inflammation. But no sooner had he sent forth this pittiful clamour, than the poor Carpenter, who lay snorting all this while in his suspended Trough, and had taken there rest though less pleasure, than his Guest, began to rouse himself out of his slumber; and fearing the imminency of danger, with his axe he smites the Cord in two, by which his kimelin or Tub was tyed; that so he might by a passage purposely made through his Garden, slice the depths, and so larch into the Main Ocean.

And down goeth all.

Down goes the Carpenter, down goes Tarboord, Larboord, Ship, Tackling, and all his Provision.

——Till he came to the Cell
Upon the floze, and there a twoune he lay
Up steer than Allon and Hend Nicholay.

He never left tumbling till he came to the Cellar floor; and now senseless, what with the Fall, and what with fear, he lies in a Swoun. This Fall from his Roost, frights

them from their Rest. This unexpected accident rouseth and raiseth fair *Alyson* and her unfortunate *Nicholas*; who (as may be supposed) might walk in his Shirt, for any rest he could take, since his late Lecture read him on his Posteriora's; yea, and one who stood in more need of a Plaister, than any such Panick Distemper. But need makes the old wife trot. Some Plot must they devise or other, or they stand disgraced for ever. With joynt consent therefore, they raise a clamour in the streets, call their Neighbours together, to view this doleful Spectacle—a distracted Carpenter: for all must be [illegible]d to his distemper.

The neighbours, both small and grete
In towne——

It is the condition of Common people to press into the view of such Novels, be they never so disastrous. Yea, we shall observe how the most contemptible wretch, who before was never eyed, if he chance to be wounded in the Street, with what numbers of vulgar Spectators he becomes forthwith enclosed: So attentive be their Ears, so intentive their Eyes to become Nuntio's of

others

others miſeries. Here then you may ſuppoſe this Common Rout ſtanding in a Ring or Circle, gazing and admiring the unfortunately-deluded Carpenter like a blind point in the midſt of a Centre, weakly languiſhing: while this ruſtick and uncivilized fry, ready to hear what *Nicholas* and his *Alyſon* were as ready to report; gave all attention to the ſad, but feigned relation of this woful accident. No matter, though the poor Carpenter interrupt them, his Tale muſt not ſo much as be heard by them. Their Story was the firſt, and it muſt be beſt heard.

They told every man, that he was wood He was agast ſo of Noyes flood.

Alas good man! what a Solemn diſcourſe they make of his Frenzy, to palliate the rankneſs of their inordinate Fancy: With more than frontleſs impudence they avouch, that it was the Carpenter's diſtempered conceipt, that brought himſelf to this miſ-fortune. For ſtanding in great fear of a ſecond *Noah's* Floud, which out of his own brainſick Phantaſie, he had long time conceited, to prevent all enſuing danger, he had cauſ-

ed

ed to be provided one Kinelyn for himself, and other two for them to hang for Company, with all necessary provision against the violence of such an approaching Inundation. This were they enforced, for peace sake, to condescend to, being neither willing to incur his Displeasure, nor cross the Fury of his incorrigible humor. This merry Relation changeth the common peoples Admiration into Laughter; they jeer the lame Carpenter, and by their light Credulity vindicate two Wantons from dishonour. Though he vow and swear, they have vowed not to hear. That Beast of many heads will not credit this Beast of one head. They applaud the Jest, and aspers on him the disgrace.

Thus was *Alysson* cheared, *Nicholas* cheated, *Absolon* revenged, *John* the Carpenter gulled, and the Spectators infinitely pleased. Nor is it to be doubted, but if this Accident had not hapned, *Nicholas* or *Alysson* would have found one trick or other, to have deluded the Carpenter, enjoyed their Pleasure, and evaded Danger. And none in my judgment more probable than this; to wit, that when this supposed Deluge had

not

not come according to the time limited, *Nicholas* out of a dissembled Zeal, would have pretended, how by the incessancy of his Prayers, Heaven's wrath was appeased, their Cataracts stopped, and this universal Overflow till an other season stayed. Howsoever, by the sweet Harmony which all this Family afterwards enjoyed, as may be charitably supposed, our Comment upon this Tale shall be in these Verses finally closed.

The Cloud's dispers'd, the Floud or Deluge past,
And Absolon *of wanton become chast,*
John *to his* Alyson *is reconcil'd,*
And Shee, perhaps, by Nicholas *with Child,*
John *doth his jealous humor quite [illegible],*
What Alice *did, she will not do again.*
Heav'n Smiles, Earth joyes, when all things fall amending,
And Tragick Acts have such a Comick ending.

A Com-

A Commentary upon Chaucer's Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale.

Experience, though none authoritie &c.

This *Englisſh Homer*, our incomparable *Chaucer*, here brings in an antient Wife of *Bath*, with an Old Wives Tale, yet not ſo old as true, ſeeing her own **Experience** had confirm'd, whatſoever her tongue expreſs'd: wherein ſhe draws the firſt occaſion of her diſcourſe, from the griefs which accompany a Married life; being either weary of their preſent choice, and conſequently affecting change; or being deprived of their choice, brings upon them new diſcontents,

discontents, by an untowardly change. Then she discourseth of the number of Husbands which she had since her Twelve years of Age. Wherein, she presseth an Argument against such, as held opinion against Bygamy.

That sithen Christ went never but onis To wedding, in the Cane of Galilee &c.

As if she should say, albeit Christ, who honoured Marriage with the very first Miracle that ever he wrought upon Earth, never went to any Wedding but once, and that in *Cane* of *Galilee*, will you hence conclude, that we are never to marry more than once, and so exclude Bigamy? So might you infer (upon like consequence) because Christ never scourged Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple but once, nor was tempted in the Desart (for ought we read) but once, nor wept over *Hierusalem* more than once, that neither sacrilegious Symonists are more than once to be scourged, nor temptation more than once to be suffered, nor tears of compassion more than once to be tendred. Nay, to refell this erroneous Opinion, which, even some of the antient

Fathers

Fathers of the primitive Church have with too much pertinacy held, this good old wife of *Bath* hath an Argument in ſtore for her own purpoſe, which ſhe borrows from the very Touchſtone of Truth, the holy Scripture.

—— Jeſu god and man
Spake in repreefe of the Samaritan'
Thou haſt had fiue huſbands ——

Whence ſhe proves, that in thoſe daies there was no ſuch reſtraint, but that it was uſual and lawful for any one to marry after the Deceaſe of their Husband: Albeit, we find it commended by Apoſtolical Authority, and recommended to Poſterity, That thoſe only were to be honoured for Widows, who were Widows indeed. True it is, that in this place here alledged by our Wife of *Bath*, this *Samaritan* was reproved, not for that ſhe had married five Husbands, but for that after their Deaths, ſhe had taken her ſelf to one who was not her Husband; with whom, till then, ſhe had lived without remorſe of Conſcience in all Incontinence. Albeit, that any one ſhould be reſtrained to a preſcript number either of

Wives

Wives or Husbands, it was yet never heard. Not to insist therefore upon the difficulty of the Text, nor to play Schole-Divine, which would ill beseem one of her Sex, she makes use of a Text far more easie and proper for her purpose.

But well I wote expresse without lie
God badde us for to were and multiplie
That gentill Text can I well understond &c.

She could find in her heart to multiply in Husbands as well as Children. One of the Ends of Marriage she observes, and this she embraceth with so free admittance, as her Age must not deprive her of hope to multiply: Husbands therefore she holds necessary Associates in all Ages, as well for Recreation as Procreation; being for their Love to leave whatsoever they most tenderly love. Parental Love is excluded, where Wedlock is admitted. Neither Bigamy, nor Octogamy (if Wives become their Husbands Survivers) are to be questioned. The last is no sooner committed to earth, than a new one is to be sought for on earth. Love and Youth, no nor Age, if it have a Colts tooth,

tooth, can converſe with Ghoſts and Goblins. This ſhe confirms by Inſtance.

Lo ye the wiſe king Salamon
I trow had wives mo than on
As would God it leful were to me
To be refreshed halfe ſo ofte as he.

She holds it an honour to encreaſe in this Number; and by variety to allay ſatiety. Whence, ſhe reflects upon her own former eſtate, and highly joys in her interchange of choyce.

Blessed be God, I have had five
Of which I have pyked out the best
Both of their nether purſe, and eke their Cheſt.

She provides her ſelf of a Husband to fit every ſenſe, that ſhe might more ſenſibly enjoy what ſhe did by all likelihood moſt affect. That ſhe might attain the end, ſhe neglects not the means: No Procreation without Action. She holds it fit therefore to ſhare in his Ability of Perſon, as well as Fortune. And becauſe Practice begets Perfection, ſhe loves ever to be in ure: She finds far more Advantage in diſpatch, than delay:

delay; Her old Husband muſt no ſooner be diſpatch'd, than a new one muſt be catch'd: Thus is ſhe ever mated and matched.

Of five husbands ſcolynge am I
Welcome the ſixte when ever he ſhall dy.

The thought is taken: All fleſh is mortal; but of all fleſh, ſhe would have none more mortal than her husbands. She would ever have her aged Husband look like Death's-head; mean time, her ſage Admonitions are never wanting, to bid him remember his end. Life is but a Trouble; but of all others, ſhe is moſt troubled with his Life. Thus dictates ſhe of her Husband's Pilgrimage; which, by how much the ſhorter, it is for her all the better. A new Change is her Royal Exchange: Nor is the Market ſo ſcarce, but ſhe hopes to fit her turn with a new Choice. Mean time, you may hence perceive, that ſhe would have her Husband's Life of any Stuff rather than *Perpetuano* or *Sempiternum*. Like a charitable Wife, ſhe could wiſh with all her heart that his Soul were at reſt, while ſhe were left to the Cares of the World and the Fleſh; for both which, ſhe would ſo

ſeaſonably provide, that as Fortune, and her late Husband's Providence had ſufficiently furniſh'd her for the one, ſo ſhe would take eſpecial care that ſhe were not famiſh'd in the other. This ſhe confirms, not only with her own Opinion, but by Apoſtolical Doctrine.

For than the Apoſtel ſaith, that I am free
To wedde a godeſhalfe, where it liketh me &c.

This likewiſe ſhe ſtrengthens, to give freer ſcope to her own Affections, with a freſh current of new Inſtances.

What recketh me though folke ſay vilany
Of ſhrewd Lameth, and of his bigamy? &c.

Here ſhe makes a Rehearſal of ſundry perſons (and ſome of them antient holy Patriarchs, as *Abraham* and *Jacob*) who had divers wives: and in the end, proceeds farther, diſcourſing of the ſtate of Virginity; which was recommended by way of Counſel, and no expreſs Precept, by the Apoſtle; concluding:

He ſaid, thereof preceept had he none
Men may counſaile a woman to be one
But counſailing is no commaundement
He put it in our own judgement.

To all which, ſhe addeth this enforcing Reaſon:

For had God commaunded maidenhede
Then had he dampned wedding out of dzede.

Virginity to have the preeedency is admitted, but not that Wedlock ſhould be rejected. To live a Virgin is an extraordinary gift: This, ſhe acknowledgeth, her weakneſs could never attain to. The uſe of this Doctrine therefore, ſhe thus applies unto her ſelf:

And for to ben a wife, he gave me leve
Of indulgence, ſo it be not to repzeve
To wedde me, if that my make die
Without exception of bigamie.

This Doctrine ſhe approves, for it reliſheth ſweetly to her Palat. Yea but hence there ariſeth another Objection; It is not good to touch a woman. To which ſhe

anſwers; not inordinately or licentiouſly:

For peril is, both fire and tow to aſſemble.

It is good for young Folk to avoid occaſion; for it is that which breeds a Contagion. The Fire of Fancy needs no Oyl to inflame it, nor any other Fewel to feed it, than Opportunity, which never comes uninvited. True it is (ſaith ſhe) that many there are who can live Maidens all their daies; and theſe prefer Chaſtity before any man's Society: And much good may it do them. For my own part, I find no ſuch ſtrength in my ſelf; my Frailty requires a Fellow-helper.

For well ye know, a lorde in his houshold
Hath nat every vessel all of gold
Some ben of tre.

All be not of one temper in their diſpoſition, though of one Mould in reſpect of their compoſition. All are not to be Lillies of Chaſtity; for ſo in ſhort time ſhould the world become a Deſart. Veſſels there are in one Houſe of different Metals and Tempers; yet thoſe which are of the contemptibleſt

temptibleſt ſubſtance, are for uſe and ſervice.

Virginite is great perfection
And continence eke.

Some of our antient Fathers have compared Virginity to Gold, Continence to Silver: Both of excellent eſteem, albeit the former incomparably to be preferred before the later. But all have not the gift of Chaſtity, I mean, of Virgin-purity. Many things are in holy Writ unto our Obſervance offered and recommended, which are not expreſsly obſerved. Other things there are by expreſs Precept to ſome more eſpecially commended and commanded, whereof others may ſeem to be freed and exempted, at leaſt, not ſo ſtraitly injoyned.

—— Chriſt, that of perfection is well
Badde not every wight he ſhould go ſell
All that he had ——

He was a young man to whom Chriſt gave this Command; one neither charged with Family nor Progeny. And in him, directing his ſpeech to all ſuch, as were reſolv'd to leave the world, and retire from all

earthly cares, that they might attain Perfection, by inuring themſelves in theſe Tabernacles of Clay, to an Angelical Converſation. Theſe were with *Mary* to be ſpeculatively affected; mean time thoſe *Martha's*, who were troubled about many things, were not for their provident Care in domeſtick affairs, altogether condemned. Both in their degrees being reſpectively approved.

I woll beſtow the flower of all myn age
In the acts and fruit of marriage.

She will loſe no time. Let others be Saints for her; ſhe knows what ſhe was made for: Theſe Members (ſaith ſhe) of Generation, were not made only for emiſſion and evacuation, but likewiſe for Conception and Procreation; Nor only for diſtinction ſake, to know Male from Female, but that Male ſhould be known by Female.

Why ſhould men elſe in her bokes ſet
That man ſhould yeld to his wife her dette
Now wherewith ſhuld he pay his payment?
If he ne uſed his ſely inſtrument.

Husbands are to give their wives due benevolence; but how ſhould they receive their Benevolence, if they wanted the inſtrumental means? There was nothing made in vain, much leſs that main and principal Point, without which, to this wanton widow, all the world were not worth a Point. True it is, and ſhe confeſſeth it, that there have been many Saints, who have led all their Lives in perfect Chaſtity; and ſhe is ſo far from envying their Virginity, as ſhe highly honours their Memory; yet muſt they give her leave to take another courſe, for fear ſhe ſhould do worſe: Their Actions muſt not be her Example.

Let hem with bzede of pure whete be fedde
And let us wiues eat barly bzedde.

Virgins are to be fed with Pureſt Man-

chet, becauſe their Degree is higheſt; Wives with Barly Bread, becauſe their condition is lower; yet ſo ſhe may enjoy here what ſhe moſt like, ſhe cares not much though her reward be leſs when the later Harveſt comes.

——With barly bred, Marke tell can
Our lord Jeſu refreſhed many a man.

All muſt not eat pure Manchet; nor all attain a Virgin-ſtate: This is her Reſolution.

In ſuch a ſtate as God hath cleped us
I woll perſever, I nam not precious
In wifehode woll I uſe myn inſtrument
As frely as my maker hath it ſent.

She conſtantly holds to her old Tenet: She was not made for a Maid. What ſhe hath receiv'd, muſt be as freely us'd. She expects both her Morn and Even Benevolence: She hopes to beſtead her ſelf of ſuch a man, as will out of his Honeſty or civil Curtſie, pay his Debt. Neither will ſhe for her part be altogether unthankful, as he wipes off the old Score, he may begin a new.

An husband woll I have I woll not let
Which shall be both my dettour and my thrall
And have his tribulacion with all
Upon his flesh, while that I am his wife
I haue the power during all my life
Upon his proper body, and nat he,
Right thus the apostle tolde to me
And bad our husbonds for to loue us well
All this sentence me liketh every dell.

She means to fit her self of an Husband both for Ability and Conformity to please her mind. He must give her due benevolence and become enthralled to her service. She expects homage and fealty from him, which she means to requite with some tribulation upon his Flesh. She will confirm her Affection with fresh remembrances of Correction: Whosoever wears the Doublet, she means to wear the Breeches. This braving humor of hers was to Life described by our modern Poet:

Great's her Ambition, though her Size be small;
Give but a Wench her will, and she has all.

Sove-

Soveraignty ſhe will have, and ſuch a domineering power over his captive body, as the Mare muſt prove the better Horſe. This ſhe makes good not only by her own private Opinion, nor any Fabulous Tradition, but (to her own Gloſs) Apoſtolical Doctrine: Thus picks ſhe out the Kernel, take the Shell who liſt. So as methinks ſhe very nearly reſembles her humor, who, like a ſprightly Bride, hearing thoſe words of Matrimony, to **Serve, Obey, Love** and **Honour**, ſo hardly digeſted them, as ſhe willed the Miniſter to go no farther, till ſhe had conſidered better of the matter: Whence the Poet, in the perſon of this metall'd Girle;

Two laſt I like; to do the firſter two
I ſhall not have the Patience I vow.

Whilſt this jolly Wife of *Bath* thus deſcants on her own Command, intending, as you have heard, to make her next Husband her Slave:

Up ſtert the Pardoner, and that anon
Now dame qd he, by God and by ſeint John
Ye ben a noble prechour in this caas
I was about to wedde a wife, alas
What, ſhould I bye it on my flesh ſo dere:
Yet had I lever wed no wife to yere.

This commanding Dame ſtartles her Hearers; and will cauſe this poor Pardoner anſwer his Miniſter, as ſometimes a young man anſwer'd upon like occaſion: Who, being to ſtand as Godfather for a Child, and to anſwer for it at the Fount, was asked, *Doſt thou forſake the Devil and all his Works*, &c. (as is in the words of Baptiſm) anſwered in behalf of the Child, *I forſake them all.* The very ſame day, this young man was to be married, and being by the Miniſter demanded, *Doſt thou take this Woman to thy married Wife?* &c. Imagining belike, that he was then anſwering in the perſon of the Child, to forſake the Devil and all his works, preſently replied, *I forſake them all.* While the Pardoner, poor man, ſtands thus perplexed, fearing he need take up no other

other Croſs, than his Wife, if his Fortune be to cope with ſuch a Whipſter as this *Virago*.

Abide qd ſhe, my tale is not begon
Nay, thou ſhalt drinke of another ton &c.

The Pardoner had thought the worſt was paſt; but ſhe had another Brewing for him, worſe than the firſt; and this muſt have a ſtronger taſt of the bitter Hop of Tribulation. Her own Experience, as ſhe confeſſeth, had ſufficiently furniſhed her for matter of Diſcourſe upon the troubles and afflictions which accompany Marriage; nevertheleſs, for ſo much as moſt part of men are more induced by Examples than Reaſons, ſhe means to enlarge her ſelf in that kind.

For I ſhall tell enſamples mo than ten
Who ſo wol not beware by other men
By him ſhall other men corrected be
Theſe ſame wordes writeth Ptolome

An excellent Sentence of Ptolomy in his Aſtrological obſervations; He that will not be warned by others, ſhal be a warning unto others. Though others harmes cannot make him

him beware, the harm which he incurrs ſhall beget in others a more circumſpect care: his folly ſhall make others wiſe, his weakneſs others more wary.

Dame I wol pray you, if your will were
Said this Pardoner, as ye began
Tel forth your tale, ſpare for no man
And teche us young men of your practike.

This Pardoner being a young man, and deſirous to be inſtructed in that Honourable State, to which in ſhort time, he purpoſeth to addreſs himſelf, craves her Direction, whereto ſhe inclines.

Gladly (qd ſhe) if it may you like
But that I pray to all this company
If that I ſpeke after my fantaſy
As taketh not a greſe——

She eaſily gives way to his requeſt, provided, that none of all her company take diſtaſt at ought ſhe ſhall ſay; being now to ſpeak freely, and after her own Phantaſie, purpoſely to paſs time away: After which Introduction, ſhe proceeds to this her pleaſant Relation.

Now

Now Sirs, than shall I tell forth my tale
As ever mote I drinke wine or ale
I shal say soth. Tho husbonds that I had
Thre of hem were good, and two were bad.

She repeats afresh the number of her Husbands, with their Dispositions, yea, and Constitutions too, as appears after:

The thre good men were riche and olde
Unnethes might they the statute holde
In which they were bounden unto me
Ye wot well what I meane of this parde.

As if she should say, they were rich in Possessions, but of cold Constitutions. Nature was decay'd in them; they could not perform the Dues of Marriage. Their sleeps were too long, and their Benevolence too short; This was her meaning, she needs no clearer Exposition.

As

As God me helpe, I laugh whan I thinke
How prowdly a night I made hem to swinke
But by my fay, I tolde of it no more
They had me yeve her londe and her treasore &c.

They wanted not their Curtain-Lectures; being far better taught than fed. Time was indeed, when she humored their old Chops, and used all diligence to win their Love; not a good Morsel, but they had their part; but this was before they parted Stakes. The world is alter'd from what it was: They have now infeoffed her in the whole. All their Lands and Hereditaments, Estates Real and Personal, were past to her and hers for ever; insomuch, as should they have arrived to the Happiness to have surviv'd her, they could hardly recover their Thirds. Now she holds it lost labour to strive to please, where no Profit can arise.

What

What, should I take kepe hem for to
pleáse:
But if it were for my profite and myn
eáse
I set hem so a worke by my faie
That many a night they songen wel
awaie.

They never laugh't till their hearts ak'd before they were married. She sets them their Task, and every night they were to render an Account. Before this their unhappy Marriage, they might sing *Care away*; Now must they change the Burden of their Song to *Well away*; for well it cannot be with them before their dying-day.

The bacon was not set for hem I trowe
That some men haue in Essex at Don-
mowe.

The old Proverb was this:

He that is not with Penitence taken
For that he married not before, or married
now,
May challenge a Flitch of Essex *Bacon,*
And carve his Morsel in the Cow of Donmow.

But these poor Snakes of hers were far
from

from challenging any property in either. For their Marriage had brought out no good effect in them, but only Repentance. Rough were her Salutes, Bare her Commons, cold her Comforts. So far were they from Command, as their Lives were a continued slavery.

I governed hem so well after my lawe
That eche of them full blisful was and fawe
To bring me gay things fro the fayre
They were full fain whan I spake hem faire.

Fair words make Fools fain. It is true what the Poet sometimes sung:

With Price or Prayer the hardest heart is won,
Which Age must do, when nought else can be done.

These aged and decrepit Husbands of hers, must supply their want of due benevolence with bounty and benificence. One comfortable smile, or amorous look, are the readiest Keys to unlock these old mens Chests. To the Fayr they go, or rather creep; but of necessity they must go whom the Devil

drives. Where their only busines is to curry Favour with a commanding Dame, by purchace of a Fayring. Other means they want to purchase their Peace; they purpose therefore to buy it at any Price. Content is worth a Crown; and it must cost them a Crown, but they will procure one minute of Content: And that's the longest Lease they can possibly expect.

Ye wise wives that can understonde
Thus shuld ye speke, and bere hem on honde.
For halfe so boldly there can no man
Swere and lye, as a woman can.

An excellent Commendation for her own Sex! And confirmed by a Tragick Poetess of our own, in these words:

Women are least of Goods, the worst of Evils,
Their best are worse than men, their worst than Devils.

Truth is, they may make bold with themselves; albeit, no modest nor gentile Spirit, (unless they sweat in *Swetnam's Surquedry*) can find in their heart to throw such Aspersions on them. But omitting this, you shall here

here perceive that this wife of *Bath*, out of her grounded Experience, like a judicious Schole-Miſtreſs to all young married wives, begins her Lecture; where ſhe informs them how to demean themſelves in their ſeveral places. Free and friendly is her Advice, accept it who liſt; thus ſhe proceeds.

A wiſe wife ſhall if that ſhe can her gode
Bere him in honde the cowe is woode
And take witneſſe of her owne mayde
Of her aſſent:

A twofold Expoſition may be drawn from theſe Lines. Firſt, If the good-wife deſire to put Money in her Purſe, ſhe will pretend, for want of Grain, or ſome other vendible Commodity, that her Cow is run mad, and that ſhe hath ſold her to the Butcher for little or nothing; purpoſely to prevent danger; mean time ſhe converts the benefit of this pretended Bargain to her ſelf, and ſo cheats her Husband. Or elſe thus; She hath appointed a meeting with a private Friend, to whom ſhe can well ſpare a Morſel, when her Husband ſees not; And the place of this meeting is the Byer, or

where her Kine lie; where to prevent her Husband's Repair, and free their amorous Embraces from all ſuſpicious Fear, ſhe feigns her Cow to be wood, which ſhe makes good by her Maid's Aſſent, who is ready to juſtifie her Dames Speech: She wills him therefore to be wary that he come not there, leſt he receive ſome hurt. Which Fetch is not much unlike that of hers, who deſirous to do a Courteſie to a Friend, but out of all hope to get opportunity for effecting what ſhe did ſo much deſire; at laſt ſhe remembred, how there was nothing in the world more terrible to her Husband, than a Bear; by which means ſhe fitted her ſelf of what ſhe moſt lov'd, by affrighting him with what he moſt fear'd. This trick therefore ſhe plays him, with conſent of her Sweet-heart, whom ſhe preferr'd before him. She contracts with her Friend to cover his Servant in a Bear's Skin, and tie him near to that private place where they had appointed, and which the poor Wittal himſelf no leſs ſuſpected. Up he mounts, but as quickly deſcends; for the terrible ſight of this counterfeit Bear drove from his memory the conceit of all other Fear, which the Epi-

grammatiſt

grammatiſt no leſs pleaſantly weaves up, in this manner.

A wily Wench there was (as I have read)
Who us'd to **Capricorn** *her Husband's head;*
Which he ſuſpecting, lay in private wait,
To catch the Knave, and keep his Wife more ſtrait
But all in vain; they day by day did mate it,
Yet could his four Eyes never take them at it.
This ſubtil Wench perceiving how they ſtould
At laſt prevented be, do all they could:
For now **Italian**-*like, her Husband grew*
Horn-mad, I wis, and kept her in a Mew;
Invent'd a Trick, which to accompliſh better,
Unto her Friend ſhe cloſely ſent a Letter,
And thus it was; Friend, you ſhall know by me
My Husband keeps me far more narrowly
Than he was wont; ſo as to tell you true,
You cannot come to me, nor I to you.
Yet ſpite of his Eyes, and as many more,
Wee'l uſe thoſe Pleaſures which we us'd before:
Only be wiſe, and ſecond what I wiſh;
Which to expreſs (my Friend) know this it is;
My Husband, as he hates the **Horn** *to wear,*
Of all the Badges forth, ſo fears he th' **Bear**,

More than all other Beasts which do frequent
The Heathy **Forest's** *spatious Continent.*
If thou wilt right me then, and pepper him,
Cover thy Servant in a false Bear's Skin:
And come to morrow as thou us'd before,
Tying thy Servant to my Chamber door.
After this quaint Direction he attir'd
His man in Bear-skin, as she had desir'd:
Entring the Chamber, he received is
With many a Smile, Back-fal, and sweetned
Kiss.
For they're secure of all that was before,
Having a **Bear,** *that kept the* **Bulke from**
Doze.
The Wittal Fool no sooner Inckling had,
Then up the Stairs he ran as he were mad:
But seeing none but th' **Bear** *to entertain him,*
Of Horns he never after did complain him.

I have here set down this Conceit to the full, because it hath such near resemblance to this part of *Chaucer's* Tale: Wherein we proceed.

—— **But herkneth how I sayde.**
Sir old Reynarde, is this thyn aray
Why is mine neighbours wife so gay?

The

The first instruction she gave young Wifes, was how to Gull their Husbands, and how they were to cram their Purses with nimble cheats, or enjoy an amorous choice. Now like a domineering Housewife, she tells them, how they must twit their Husbands, if their Neighbours Wives goe trimmer or neater than they. As if she should say, What Sir *Raynard*, ye fox-skin'd Chuffe, must I come behind such a Gossip for fashion? Must I Snayl-like, keep still under roof, while thou goes a Ranging to thy Neighbour's house, and neighs after thy Neighbour's Wife? You Sir, may whisper a wanton Tale in the ear of such a Maid, and you must not be reproved? Nay Sir *Lecher*, you must be in all your amorous actions approved? Mean time, if I have a Gossip or a Friend, without conceit of ill, I must be chid, while you, Sir, come reeling home, upbraiding me, that I play wanton in such an house, or dishonour you in such a place. Every Ale-bench must be the Stage where you act my disgrace: where sometimes, you revile me, for my poverty; or else disparage me for my Parentage; or if my descent be above yours, you tax me

of pride, and tell me, high blood ever ſparkles for good Cloathes. Sometimes my mirth mads you, otherwhiles my melancholy diſtracts you. If I be fair, my fort is half wonne, my chaſtity cannot hold out long; every opportunity tempts me, every light Aſſailant taints me. Some, you ſay, chuſe us for Portion, others for Proportion; ſome for Beauty and outward Feature, others for Breeding and Behaviour; ſome for Affability, others for Agility; ſome for pure and dainty hands, others for ſmall enazur'd Arms; All which, you ſay, are Lures to Luſt, and keep the High-Road to the Devil's Court. Again, if I be foul, why then I turn common Haxter; I will never want for Trading: As fair Forts are won by long Siege; ſo we that are foul, will rather lay ſiege unto others, than not be won. Spaniels are not more fawning, than we are fancying. He were a mean Perſonage we could not affect, and this were our comfort, "She is a black Crab that can find no Mate: Though our choice be not ſo worthy, we ſhall find one Gander-gooſe or other to fit our Fancy.

Thus

Thus ſaiſt thou lozel, whan thou goeſt to bed
That no wiſe man nedeth foz to wed.

A ſtrange kind of Even-ſong; when the day is ſpent in ranging, and the Evening in railing. Doeſt thou think, *Lorel*, that to go to heaven by a Wife, is to go by Bow and not by String? Well Sir, I hope to ſee you go by the String, and then your way will be readier. You ſay, a dropping, ſmoaky houſe and a chiding wife will cauſe a man fly out of his houſe. What will a dropping Noſe do, you Ice-Ickle you? You ſay, Wives have the Trick to diſſemble and ſhroud their Vices, yea, and colour them too with fair Pretences, as if they were ſpecial Vertues; But Wood that ſhines moſt, is moſt commonly leaſt ſound: We can find time to fit you with a Peny-worth, and make your Ears look through your Night-cap, after the new Faſhion: And what of all this? We leave (I hope) ſufficient for your queaſie Stomachs, when all this is done. Again, like a Proverbial old Dottrel, you ſay, that not only for Oxen, Aſſes, Horſes, and Hounds, but even Baſons, Lavers, Spoons,

Spoons, Stools, Pots, & other Veſſels, men uſe to try them, before they buy them; whereas, Wives muſt not be tryed, till they cannot deny it; being to be wedded before they be Bedded. Heyday! is your Spirit ſo Coltiſh? It ſeems, if your Judgment might paſs, or ſtand for a Decree, you would try before you married, and ſo take occaſion to repent before you needed. Neither will theſe untowardly humors content you, but they muſt yet run on worſer Extreams. Your Doltſhip will not ſtick to ſay, how nothing diſpleaſeth me more, than not to hear my Beauty praiſed, my leſs than ordinary parts admired; Nay, I am diſcontent forſooth, when you look not Babies in mine Eyes, and fame my Beauty in every place; Again, if you make not a ſolemn Feaſt on my Birth-day, with preparation of Luſcious Fare for your Gueſts, of Sumptuous Attire for my ſelf, a free and friendly Welcom to all, eſpecially to my Nurſe, whom you muſt that day highly honour, and the Criſp-hair'd Wag that attends me in my Chamber, with all my Fathers Folk and his Allies, you are out of my Books for ever.

Thus saist thou old barel full of lies.
And yet of our prentise Jenkin
For his crisp heer, shining as gold fine.
And for he squireth me both up and doune
Hast thou caught a false suspectioun.
I woll him nat. ——

Thus Sir, you use the Liberty of your lavish Tongue; yea, my poor prentice *Jenkin* cannot be free from your Jealousie and Suspition. If I at any time use him for the Squire of my Body, or to Usher me in the streets: Your yellow humour interprets this to be too much familiarity, and that *Jenkin* must become Father of your Progeny. No Sir, you shall know that I am not brought to that low sail, but if you should dye to morrow, I could make choice of a statelier Minion than *Jenkin*. But to let this pass, how is it, you old musty Dotard, that with a sorrow you hide the keys of your Chests from me; have I not a property in your goods aswel as you? Do you mean to make an Ideot of me?

Thou

Thou ſhalt nat both though thou were wood
Be maiſter of my body and of my good

How is it Sir, that you ſometimes promiſed with your body to honour me, and with all your worldly goods to endow me, and that now with the firſt you diſhonour me, and for the later (like a Devil in the Vault) you lock them from me? I think Sir, if it were in your power, you would lock me up in your Cheſt too, but that's above your cunning. Had you but ſo much wit in your Sage Sconce, you would rather in this ſort demean your ſelf towards me, "Good wife, go where you liſt; diſport your "ſelf where you pleaſe, mine ear is open to "no Tales; my knowledge hath given me "that approvement of you, as I cannot ſuſ-"ſpect you. For I muſt tell you, we women cannot endure that any one ſhould queſtion us where we live, or whom we love; where we gad, or when we Goſſip. Of all men bleſt be that ſaying of the wiſe Aſtrologer *Ptolomy*, who drew this concluſion from the Depth of his Philoſophy.

Of all men his wiſedome is the beſt
That recketh not who hath the world in hond.

His condition is the happieſt, who for Affairs of this world is indifferenteſt. This Sentence here this Goodwife uſeth, purpoſely to withdraw her Husband from intermedling in his own Eſtate, and abſolutely to inveſt her ſelf in it. As if ſhe ſhould ſay, You Sir, that have the one Foot in the Grave already, how is it that you incumber your mind ſo much with things tranſitory? you have enough for your time; ſhake hands with the world, ſeeing the world hath now ſhaken hands with you. Leave the care of theſe Buſineſſes to me. Neither, do I only ſpeak this in behalf of your temporal Eſtate, but in delights of your Bed. What if another take a Shive of your cut Loaf; muſt this trouble you? Doubt not, Good man, but you ſhall have enough left to ſerve your turn. He is too too envious, that cannot endure another ſhould light his Candle at his Lanthorn. This neither leſſens your Light, nor the other weakens your delight.

Thou

Thou ſaieſt alſo, that if we make us gay
With clothes, or with precious array
That it is peril of our chaſtite &c,

Beſides, all this, you ſay Sir, if we go gay, we muſt needs be gameſom. We cannot be neat, but we do it to get a new Mate: And this you ſtrengthen with an Apoſtolical Exhortation, "*Array your ſelves in comely Apparel, with Shamefaſtneſs and Modeſty; not with broided hair, or Gold, or Pearls, or coſtly Apparel; but as becometh women that profeſs the fear of God.* It ſeems, you are an excellent Text-man for your own purpoſe. But I muſt not grow out of Love with my ſelf, for your Cenſure. I mean not to be taught by your Text; nor to make your Rubrick my Rule.

I nill not wonch as moch as a Gnatte
Thou ſaieſt alſo, I was like a Catte.

Comly Compariſons! You ſay a ſleek-skinn'd Cat will ever go a Caterwawing; ſhe cannot abide keeping at home. No more will I (for ſo you apply it) I muſt needs be ſhewing my gay Cloaths, there is no remedy; for Pride cannot endure to attend a Family.

Sir

Sir old fole, what helpeth thee to spien
For though thou play Argus with his hundred iyen &c.

Never play the Fool thus, to think that your Jealouſie can prevent Opportunity.

No Jealouſie can ever that prevent,
Where as two parties once be full content.

For had you as many eyes as *Ariſtor*'s Son, the hundred-eyed *Argus*, I ſhould find one Trick or other to gull you, and diſtinguiſh your Coat by an inviſible Creſt.

Thou ſaieſt eke, that ben things three
The which troubleth all this yearth.

Wine is furious, an Eave-dropper dangerous; but a Woman, you ſay, of all others moſt malicious. Yea, you have other Proverbial Reſemblances, which, at firſt ſight, are like your wiſe Parables; wherein you compare a Woman's Love to Hell, ever raging; to barren Land, no good bearing, without water, thirſty and leering; to Wild-Fire, ever burning, and deſiring to conſume whatſoever is combuſtible, or apt for kindling: You ſay likewiſe,

as

as Trees are decayed by Worms, ſo are Husbands by their Wives. But truth is, if we trouble you at Board, ſuch feeble Lorels as you, trouble us as little in Bed.

Lordings, right thus as ye haue understond
Bare I ſtifly mine old huſband on hond.

Oft-times would I twit them with theſe and ſuch like Speechs, which (as I pretended) were uſually bolted forth by them, when they were drunk; and two Witneſſes had I in readineſs to juſtifie their Abuſe, my jolly *Jenkin*, and my Neece. Oh how I could ſet my Countenance to frown and lowr, and ſell ſtore of Powts for nothing! I was never in my right home, but when I was out of Tune; I could whine, and plain, when I felt but little Pain. Mean time, he that came firſt to Mill, had his Corn firſt ground. I made no Bones of chuſing a dainty Morſel for my own Tooth: Yet all this while, I lay all the blame on them: They were in the fault, though I reapt the Fruit.

Of wenches would I here hem on hond
When that for sick, unethes might they stond.

I charg'd them with Wenching, when God knows, they stood in greater need of a Cawdle. Yet it delighted these old Chrones to be so thought of: They desir'd rather to be tax'd of Luxury, than Disability. And to to sharpen their Appetite, I told them, that so jealous a conceit I had of them, as my walking forth a nights was for no other end, than to take them napping with their dainty Doxies. Under which colour and pretence, I took my Range, and freely consorted with those I lov'd best. I had a Friend in a Corner to cool my Choler, and cure my Distemper. Reer Suppers were my Solace: I suited my youthful Fancy to jovial Company: And Company causeth somewhat.

Disceit, weping, spinning, God hath give
To women, kindly while that they live.

To have Deceit in our Waies, Tears in our Eyes, and the Spindle in our hands, is an Instinct given us by Nature. By which

ſubtil means, I ever had the better of them, and gave them the Foyl at their own Weapon. Continually was I murmuring and repining, I was a Chafing Diſh at their Board, and Wormwood in their Bed. I caus'd them bite oth' Bridle, while I was ever chawing ſome good Bit.

I would no lenger in the bed abide
(If I felt his arme ouer my ſide)
Till he had made his ranſome unto me
Than would I ſuffer him to do his nicete.

I muſt tell you, I was a coy Dame, and ſtood on my Pantofles. I could not brook that his dry and ſeer Arms ſhould embrace my Waſt. Had his Body indeed been as ſtrong as his Breath, I could have lik'd him better; but the weakneſs of the one gave an Earthy ſtrength to the other. Turn to him I would not under a couple of Capons; He muſt purchaſe my Love, or farewel Froſt.

And therefore euery man this tale I tell
Wiue whoſo may, all bene for to ſel
With empty hondes ——

I am

I am nothing nice in the Diſcovery of my own Device; make uſe of it who will. Here is the Fair, buy who liſt: they may furniſh themſelves for nothing. Sometimes I would not ſtick to put on a ſmooth Brow, and feign a kind of Fonding, with a ſtrong deſire of ſeeming to accept what was privately tendered by him.

And make me than a fained appetite
And yet in Bacon had I neuer delite.

Yet all this was but a ſeeming Appetite; Such courſe Meat was not for my dainty Stomach. All this, and more did I for mine own ends, Which I had no ſooner obtain'd, than I put on mine old Countenance. Little Quiet could he have either in his Repaſt, or Repoſe, at Bed, or at Board. Yea, ſo ſtrong was my Spleen, ſo violent my Hate, as had the Pope's Holineſs been preſent, I am perſuaded I ſhould have ſhewn ſmall Reverence to his Pontifical Preſence. Out might my Paſſion have iſſued, and ſhewn her Impatience. Neither do I remember that he ever gave me one word, but I gave him two for't. Yea, ſhould I now make my laſt Will and Teſtament, and diſ-

cover to the world all our Bickerings, and unſavoury Parlies; I would take my Book-Oath that I am nought behind with him, but have fitted him to the full. And this was the direct way to purchaſe my Peace, otherwiſe had we been at Debate for ever.

For though he loked as wode as a lion
Yet ſhould he faile of his concluſion &c.

Thus could I vye in colours to delude his Nature, and fit my Diſpoſition to oppoſe his Humor. If he playd the Lamb, I could play the Lion; if he the Lion, I the Lamb.

Than would I ſay, god lefe take kepe
How mekely loketh wilkin our ſhepe
Cum nere my ſpouſe,——

What a Racket my pretty Pigſnie keeps? Let me kiſs thy tother Cheek, my lovely Honey-ſuckle. Can you that have preach'd ſo long of *Job*'s Patience, retain ſo long in your heart any Malice? Ye men, as you are ſtronger by nature, ſo ſhould you be diſcreeter, and of ſtayeder temper. What man, are you jealous of me that you do not only enjoy me? What, would you have my

my beſt Commodity to your ſelf? Why, take it to you, and much good may it do you. I know you for a notable Soaker; you cannot endure a Sharer: Well, go to; you ſhall have it to you, and your ſole uſe for ever. For know, my beſt Spouſe, if I would ſet my Jewel at ſale; I could go in more gaie and freſh Arraie than I do now: but the honeſt Continence of my Deſire makes me walk in homelie Attire. Good ſooth, you are much to be blam'd; I have no Toy, but for your Tooth. My own Breaſt knows beſt whether I love any other; For if I did, your quick Eie would ſoon diſcover it.

Such maner words had we on hond
Now will I ſpeake of my fourth huſbond.

Thus far has our Wife of *Bath* diſcours'd of the Natures, Humors, and Features of her three firſt Husbands: Wherein ſhe hath expreſt to life how harſhlie Youth and Age are ſuited; with eſpecial Directions how the Diſtaſtes of a loathed Bed may be allaied; how Youthful Delights may be

wiſely carried; and the waiwardneſs of Age better tempered.

My fourth huſband was a revelour
This is to ſay, he had a paramour.

She is now fitted in her kind; what ſhe feigned to be in her three Husbands before, ſhe finds really lov'd by her fourth: Neither will ſhe abate him a hair, and ſhe gives the Reaſon.

—I was yong and full of ragerie
Stubborn and ſtrong, and joly as a Pie.

She was but in the Flower of her Youth; albeit, ſhe had diſpatch'd three Husbands; full of Metal and Agilitie; of a ſtubborn and ſtrong Will, for it had never been deni'd her; of a pliant and nimble Body; and this had ſuch found who had tri'd her: One as right as my Leg, and ſeemingly, of that wanton Wenches humor, who could not endure to have this word, *Notwithſtanding*, mentioned in her Jointure, but lik'd well of this Clauſe, *Provided alwaies*; which if he were not, another ſhould. That her Education or Breeding was good, may appear by thoſe ſingu-

lar

lar Qualities which ſhe privately both profeſſed and practiſed. She could dance neatly, and ſing to the Harp ſweetly, if ſhe had but liberally taſted of the ſweet Grape: Which, it appears, ſhe dearly loved, by her free Reproof towards one, by whom his Wife was not only from drinking Wine reſtrained, but being taken at it, was of Life deprived.

Metellus, the foule churle the ſwine
That with a ſtaffe bereft his wife her life
For the dronke wine: though I had be his wife &c.

This is meant of that temperate *Roman*, *Metellus*, who, albeit he fell into this violent Extream, upon the finding of his wife diſtempered with Wine (which Vice, by the Teſtimonie both of *Plutarch* and *Macrobius*, was held among the *Romans* to be more puniſhable in Women, than Adulterie) was highly renowned for a Noble and Victorious Souldier, having highly improved his Fame to his Countries ſucceeding Honour. But had this Good-wife of *Bath* been *Metellus* his Wife, ſhe vows ſhe would

have pli'd the Pitcher in ſpite of all his Valour: and had a little touch of *Venus* Game too, after her Blood were inflam'd with the Spirit of Liquor.

For alſo ſeker, as cold engendreth haile
A licorus mouth muſt have a lecherous taile.

This her own Experience had taught her, which ſhe patcheth up with a ſhread of her Philoſophy, to ſtrengthen it the better. Wine, indeed, affords Fewel for Luſt. The underſtanding part being darkned and drowned, the Senſitive part becomes domineering, by ſubjecting Reaſon to blind Affection. She finds poor Defence for her Honour, who deprives her ſelf of that which ſhould be her beſt Armour.

But lorde Chriſt, when it remembreth me
Upon my youth, and my jolite
It tickleth me about the hart rote
Unto this daie it doth my hart bote &c.

It delights her to remember the Pranks of her Youth; and no doubt, it would highly content her to have a Taſt of *Æſon's* Herb,

Herb, and ſo become young again: For her Deſires continue ſtrong, though her Strength be weak; her Thoughts green, though her Hairs be gray.

But age alas, that all will envenime
Hath me beraft my beaute, and my pith
Let go farewel, the deuil go therewith.

A charitable old Trader! Age like a Venom, hath crept upon her, the Beauty and Strength of her Youth have left her; both which, ſeeing ſhe cannot recover, ſhe freely bequeaths the Devil that which ſhe cannot keep with her. Yet holds ſhe on in her old Trade of Folly.

The floure is gone, there nis no moze to tell
The bran (as I beſt can) now mote I ſell.

Few or none but they will leave Sin, when Sin hath left them; but this merry Goſſip will ſcarcely leave it, when ſhe is now left by it. Though the Flower of her Youth be loſt, the Bran of her age is left, and that muſt now be bolted, or ſhe will never reſt contented.

But

But yet to be right merry woll I fonde
Now forth to tell of my fourth husbonde.

All this which hath been said last, must serve for a Preamble to her fourth Husband; of whom her Discourse must be but short, according (as may be supposed) to the length of his Life, and height of her Love.

I saie I had in hart great despite
That he of any other had delite.

He was of a wanton Life himself, and therefore looks for his Wife in the Oven, where himself had been. Ill Doers are ever ill Deemers. None are more suspicious than such as are most vicious. A Licentious man's Eye is in every Corner; to whom the very least Occasion will minister apparent ground of Suspition.

But he was quit, by God and saint Joce
I made him of the same wood a croce &c.

Truth was, he could not for his heart be more jealous of me, than I was of him. Neither indeed, had he any just cause to suspect me of Wantonness. Here she excuseth herself that she never consorted with any good

Fellows

Fellows for her own bodily pleaſure, in all this Husband's time. Only ſhe invited them to good Cheat; being now turn'd profeſſed Goſſipper: And all this, perchance, (ſo perverſe was her Diſpoſition) rather to nettle and ſting her Husband, than any ſingular Delight ſhe took, either in reſpect of her Comrades, or Delicacy of Tooth: as may be probably gathered by thoſe Verſes immediately following.

——I made folke ſuch chere
That in his own greee I made him frie
For anger, and for very jelouſie.

Out of a Jealouſie, or rather a conſtant perſuaſion, that ſhe was as liberal of her Fleſh, as of her Fare, he fried himſelf in his own Greaſe: he waſted himſelf with anger: ſeeing both a weakning of his Fortune, and impeaching of his Honour (as he verily ſuſpected) cope ſo cloſely one with another.

By God, in yearth I was his purgatorie
For which I hope his ſoul be in glorie.

It ſeems ſhe was good for ſomething, if it were but to become her Husband's Purgatory;

gatory; more properly the Touchſtone of his Patience. By this means ſhe thinks he had his Purgatory on Earth, and conſequently, without any Rub or Stay in his way, he may go directly to Heaven. Afflictions being Exerciſes, he needed not ſuffer his Body to ruſt for want of them, having both at Bed and at Board ſuch plenty of them.

For God it wote, he ſate ful oft and ſong
Whan that his ſhoe full bitterly him wrong.

Like a down-right honeſt man, he ſet the beſt Face he could on't. Yet when he feigned moſt Mirth, he had greateſt cauſe to mourn. Every man knew not where his ſhoe wrinch'd him. He might laugh till his heart ak'd again, yet never a whit nearer relief: She had vow'd to be his Executioner, purpoſely to become his Executor.

He died whan I came fro Hierusalem
And lieth in grave under the Rode beem.

This good wife, belike, had taken her Pilgrimage to *Jeruſalem*, either voluntarily or

or by Injunction. No doubt, had ſhe plaied Pilgrim all her time, her Husband had a lighter heart. But now coming home, ſhe finds her Husband drawing near his laſt home. Whom ſhe ſees no ſooner departed, than ſhe takes courſe to prevent his Revival, to have him no leſs ſuddenly, than ſolemnly buried. Under the Rood-loft (a place of eſpecial Reverence in former times) ſhe cauſeth his Grave to be made; albeit in no ſumptuous manner as ancient Heroes have been interred, as ſhe after expreſſed:

All nis his tombe ſo curious
As was the ſepulture of him Darius
Which that Apelles wzought ſo ſubtelly
It is but waſt to burie him preciouſly.

To beſtow on him ſo Gorgeous or Sumptuous a Sepulchre, as was that which was erected in the honour of *Darius*, formed by the curious Art of famous *Apelles*; or as that of *Artimiſia* in the Memory of her *Mauſolus*, were but (as ſhe thinks) loſt labour: So much coſt would make a poor Executor, and too much impoveriſh the Survivor.

Let him farewell, god give his ſoul god reſt.
He is now in his grave and in his cheſt.

He is now laid in Earth, and his Soul, I hope, at reſt: He had my leave to be gone before he went. To grieve for that which cannot be remedied is bootleſs. I will ſpare then to ſhed any Tears, ſeeing they are no leſs Fooliſh than fruitleſs. And ſo Good night to my fourth Husband.

Now of my fifth husband woll I tell
God let never his ſoule come in hell.

She had no ſooner left her fourth Husband in his Grave, than ſhe makes ready to go to Church for a Fifth. And of ſuch an one ſhe ſpeeds her ſelf, that it ſeems his Soul deſerv'd well of her, whatſoever his Body did. Yet is it to be wondred at, how ſhe ſhould be ſo charitable in her bleſſings towards him, who was ſo ſhrewd in his blows, towards her. But of this ſhe gives a reaſon: Truth is, he was ſhrewd to me, and gave me ſtore of rib roaſt, imagining belike that I was of the nature of the Wallnut Tree,

Tree, that muſt be cudgelled before it be fruitful; yet for all this, I cannot but remember him with a great deal of love. Though he gave me correction, he had an other winning way to gain my affection. He was of an able and active body, and could till me on with ſuch pretty Toies and Tales when he deſired to have that which I no leſs deſired my ſelf, and he could win me with a ſmile, and with a ſmooth brow allay my ſtorm.

I trow I lov'd him the better, for that he was of his love ſo daungerous to me.

A ſtrong Womans reaſon.

Follow women, they will fly you,
Fly but Women, they'l draw nigh you.
If you would a Woman move,
Seem to love not, when you love.

The way then to win them, is ſeemingly to wean our affection from them. Proffer'd ware, be it never ſo precious, is diſvalued; That only is held worth our purchaſe, which is with niceneſs gained: whatſoever is forbid us, is with eager appetite purſued by us. To utter our Ware with danger, will improve

improve our commodity moſt to our advantage and honour.

And to great cheape is ſold at to little price
This knoweth every woman that is wiſe

Far fetch'd and dear bought is good for Ladies. A vile price makes the commodity no leſs vile. Highly then was this Husband affected, becauſe he was dainty and nice in his affection. He caus'd her now and then to bite oth' bridle, and to faſt, that her Stomach might become ſtronger for the next Feaſt. She had now and then a bit and a buffet with't. All her dayes were not Holy-dayes; this made her pleaſure (becauſe rare) more welcom, when it came.

My fifth husbonde, God his ſoule bleſſe
Which I took for love and no richeſſe
He ſometime was a Clerk in Orenforde
And had left ſchole, went at home to borde
With my gossip, dwelling in our toun
God have her ſoul, her name was Alisoun

Here ſhe expreſſeth his ſtate, condition, and profeſſion; his ſtate or condition, it may ſeem, was but mean, but his perſon promiſing; pure love and no other worldly

reſpect

reſpect made her chuſe him. He was a Scholar, and unpreferr'd, and conſequently not like to be rich. But now had he left Schole, with his hopes of ſome poor Fellowſhip, which were but ſmall, in regard of his weak Parts, or that he had no Letters commendatory, from ſome great or powerful Favorite, to procure it; And now in ſtead of a Fellowſhip, he intends to board himſelf privately with Dame *Alyſon*, this Good-wifes Goſſip. Now whether this were the ſelf-ſame *Alyſon*, the Carpenter's Wife, mentioned in our *Miller's Tale*, I will not here diſpute; Only, with ſubmiſſion alwaies to deeper Judgments, I conceive, that by all probability it ſhould be the very ſame *Alyſon*, but that this Clerk of *Oxford* here mentioned, was *Nicholas* the Aſtronomer, who fancied Dame *Aliſon*, I cannot aſſent; for this bears another name. Be ſhe what ſhe will be, it appears ſhe was a kind-hearted Goſſip, and of inward Acquaintance with our Wife of *Bath*: Being ever conſtantly of her Boſom-counſel, together with another Wife, whom ſhe names not, and her Neece, in all which, ſhe repoſed great Confidence. No Secret could there

be, which might either concern her Husband or her ſelf, but it was imparted to one of theſe three. No counſel ſo private, no paſſage ſo ſecret, which was not to theſe communicate.

And ſo I did it often God it wote
That made his face full ofte redde and hote.

This Wife of *Bath* was too full of Chinks to be a good Secretary. Her Husband could tell her nothing over night, but next day ſhe would be Carrier of it abroad: wherein our Poet privately glanceth at ſuch as too freely uſe to commit their neareſt thoughts to the ſecrecy of a Woman: whereof though ſome be Seals, others be Sieves.

And ſo befil, that ones in a Lent
So oft time I to my Goſſip went &c

Now ſhe comes to relate the ſeaſon and occaſion of her firſt Familiar Acquaintance with this Clark of *Oxford*, her jolly *Jenkin*. This begun in Lent, but ſhe means to make it no time of Abſtinence. She and her kind Goſſip muſt take Air, and in ſuch Moneths as afford moſt delight. Yet cannot thoſe

freſh

freſh and fragrant Fields ſufficiently refreſh them, unleſs they have *Jenkin* the Scholar for an Uſher to conduct them. And a good Opportunity had this Good wife, for her Husband was at *London*: With liberty therefore might ſhe take her range to Vigils, Viſitations, Preachings, Pilgrimages and Proceſſions; to Stage-playes, Puppit-plaies and Marriages; where ſhe might ſee and be ſeen; yea felt, heard and underſtood. Her gay Scarlet Petticoat, and Broad-cloath Gown need now fear no Moaths; they are too daily worn to be eaten with Worms. Her Cloaths make every day their Holiday. Till her Husband come home, ſhe means not to make her own houſe her home. The Field muſt be her Walk, and *Jenkin* her Mate.

Now woll I tell forth what happed me
I ſaie, that in the fieldes walked we.

Now begun ſhe to grow more familiar with this dainty Clerk. She is now not only for walking, but talking with him; yea, and dalliance too; till in the end, ſhe holds him for her only private Friend, and ſuch an one, as ſhe could find in her heart to

commend to his Truſt the greateſt Secret ſhe has in the world.

I ſpake to him, and ſaied how that he If I were wedowe, ſhould wedde me.

This is plain dealing, and deſerves the Scholar's favourable conſtruction: As if ſhe ſhould ſay, Ye Scholars are dangerous Youths; when ye woo leaſt, ye win moſt; when ye ſpeak leaſt, ye prevail moſt. Did ye perceive nothing, Sir *Jenkin*, when of all others, I chus'd you to keep me compa-ny; walked and talked with you private-ly; and made you acquainted with my bo-ſom-Secrecy? Truly, I muſt tell you, ſhould mine Husband die, as all Fleſh is mortal, I am verily perſuaded that I ſhould wiſh with all mine heart to enjoy an Armful of you. In good ſooth we women are the verieſt Fools in the world: If we love, we cannot lain: whereas you men are mighty Diſſem-blers, and will bring us weak things into Fools Paradiſe: when you ſeem to love us, you will ſooneſt leave us. Well, durſt I truſt you, I could tell you ſomewhat would make your Ear tingle: But I will not; and yet I think I muſt; it will needs out. I am

half

half perſuaded you have given me ſome Love-powder, or I ſhould never fawn nor fond on you after this manner. Know Sir, I made choice of you for your Perſon, no Preferment nor Poſſeſſion; for I hear, you have but a poor Scholar's Fortune. Now think not that I ſtood unprovided before I came to be acquainted with you. No Sir; I muſt tell you, I need not want for Pleaſure, if I took delight in ſuch Chaffer. I ever held her a fooliſh Mouſe that had but one hole to creep out at. I am neither ſo old nor miſhapen, but I ſhould find one or other to acceptof the motion.

I bare him on hand he had enchaunted me
My Dame taught me forſoth that ſubtilte.

A dainty Device! This was Dame *Alyſon's* ſubtilty. And that ſhe might all the better perſuade him, that ſhe thinks on him by day, ſhe tels him how ſhe dreams of him by night. Where ſhe relates to him the Circumſtances of her terrible Dream: How ſhe verily thought in her ſleep that he came and aſſaulted her, purpoſing to have ſlain her:

and how ſhe ſtarted, as ſhe lay upright in her Bed, to reſiſt his Fury; which were the leaſt of her thought upon ſo fair an Opportunity. Yet interprets ſhe all this in the beſt ſence. For that abundance of Blood wherewith ſhe thought her ſelf embath'd, did ſignifie Gold, which he might be ſure to enjoy, if ever her Husband ſhould die, and her ſelf to boot.

For blod betokeneth gold, as I was taught
And all was fals, I dremed of him right naught.

All theſe ſuppoſed Dreams were but to delude him, and make him more confident of the Love ſhe bare him. A right careful Obſerver of whatſoever her ſubtil Tutor Dame *Alyſon* had inform'd her. One who had ſufficient Experience to inſtruct an apt Scholar in Rules of Dalliance.

And now ſir let me ſe, what ſhal I ſain
A ha, by God I haue my tale again.

An excellent Rhetorical * Figure here uſed by our Poet.

* Ἐπάνοδος.

It

It ſeems the remembrance of the proper Perſonage of her neat Clark, had like to have made her quite forget her Tale. Yet, at laſt, ſhe recals to mind the Story whereon ſhe is to treat, which Subject, ſometimes, ſhe was as apt to forget.

Whan that my fourth huſbond was on bere
I wept algate, and made ſoȝie chere.

Or for want rather of natural Tears, ſhe furniſh'd her ſelf of other effectual means: She wrapt an Onion in the one Nook of her Handkercher, or pump'd for Tears; or drew her Face into a Purſe, purpoſely to feign a kind of ſorrowing, when her Heart was full of Joy, in hope to enjoy her *Jenkin*.

But foꝛ that I was purveied of a make
I wept but ſmall, and that I undertake.

No doubt, but ſhe had prov'd a better Mourner, had ſhe been a worſer Purveior: Like to that Widow, whereof I have heard this Story. That, having buried three Husbands, and all thoſe with a very ſmall portion or quantity of Tears, ſhe came at laſt

to the Grave with her Fourth, for whom ſhe wept bitterly; which her Neighbors much wondring at, demanded of her the Cauſe why ſhe ſhould be ſo immoderate in her Sorrow for that laſt Husband, who had been of ſo harſh and rough a Diſpoſition, and ſo patient at the Deaths of all the other three, who were of loving and affable Natures, and had deſerved ſo well at her hands? To whom ſhe made this Anſwer; That ſhe wept not ſo much for that ſhe was of her ſweet Husband deprived, as that ſhe was now deſtitute and unprovided; whereas at the Deaths of her other Husbands, ſhe was ever of another prepared before the other was buried.

To church was my husband born on morow
With neighbours, that for him made sorow
And Jenkin our clerke ——

It is to be wondred why ſhe let him lie ſo long unburied; but it ſeems there was ſome Solemnity to be uſed, or elſe that his Friends and Neighbors did expect it. You may imagine now, when ſhe ſees her Sweet-

heart

heart *Jenkin* amongſt other Mourners, that ſhe has made a League with her Eyes, not to ſhed one Tear; with her Heart, not to ſend forth one Sigh, unleſs it be in jeſt, and ſo fool the Spectators. Neat were his Legs, pretty were his Feet: Theſe were her Objects in this Spectacle of Sorrow. This ſerious Survey or Peruſal of *Jenkin*'s Perſon had ſo taken up her Eye, as it could fix it ſelf on no other Object, while he was in Preſence. Yea, her Blood began to ſparkle now afreſh in her, ſo as in her own conceit ſhe was twenty years younger than ſhe was in the Morning. Though forty Winters had already blown upon her; and conſequently ſome Tokens of Age had ſtamp'd their Impreſſures in her: She had alwaies a Colt's Tooth. Yea, ſhe had divers other ſigns of an Invincible Patient, as ſhe her ſelf after confeſſeth.

Gap tothed I was, and that became me wele
I had the ꝑint of dame Venus ſele
As helpe me God, I was a luſtie one
And faire, riche, and yong, and well bigone.

She

She was gap-tooth'd, or wide-ſpaced, not like *Pirrhus*, whoſe Teeth were all one Bone, undivided. Though this might ſeem ſome Deformity, it became her well, even as *Venus* Mole made her more lovely: Right Bullion ſhe was, apt for any Impreſſion. Of a lively and luſty Nature; a freſh and lovely Feature; rich in Fortune; young in her own Opinion; and every way (as ſhe thought) deſerving Affection. In Senſe, ſhe was Venereal; in Heart, Martial; *Venus* gave her the Gift to be laſcivious; *Mars* to be couragious; *Taurus* was her Aſcendent, *Mars* therein Predominant: But had *Mars* been her Husband, her too common Dalliance might well have chang'd *Taurus* into *Aries*, and enjoyn'd him to hold of her for Term of Life *in Capite*.

Alas, alas, that ever love was ſin.

She beſtows the deſerving Name of Love upon hateful Luſt; but theſe are to be remarkably diſtinguiſhed, becauſe their Natures are wholly different, as the Poet ſometimes well expreſt them, in his Deſcription of Love.

Love,

Love, *what's thy Name? A Phrenſie: Whence thy Birth?*
From Heaven: *How comes it then thou liv'ſt on* Earth?
I live not there. Yet each uſurps thy Name:
'Tis true indeed, but hence redounds their ſhame.
" *I live not there, my Nature's pure and* " *juſt,*
" *But* Luſt *lives there, and* Love's *a Foe to* " Luſt.

This merry Wife of *Bath* could find in her heart, that this Wantonneſs of hers, which ſhe terms Love, were no ſin; and pity it is, thinks ſhe, that 'tis not ſo, ſeeing it affords ſuch ſweet ſelf-delight to the Senſe.

I followed aie mine inclination
By vertue of my conſtellation
That made me I couth not withdrawe
My chamber of Venus from a good felawe.

Herein our Poet covertly taxeth ſuch who attribute ſo much unto natural Providence,

dence, as though it were inevitable, and thereby uſe it as a Refuge or Sanctuary, for all their evil Actions. Unto which may be objected the Anſwer of *Chriſippus*, writing in this manner: Although (ſaith he) that Nature hath provided all things from the Beginning, and that by her Providence all things are moved and ſtirred up by a certain neceſſary Reaſon and Motion; yet notwithſtanding our Diſpoſitions and Minds are no further ſubject or in danger thereof, than their Propriety and Quality is concordant and agreeable unto the ſame. For, if by Nature our Wits be firſt made wholſom and good, apt to receive good Notions, fair Impreſſions; by being after indued with Reaſon and Underſtanding, either they do utterly put off and avoid all evil Influences and accidents, or elſe by their diſcreet temper, receive and bear them more eaſily without hurt or dammage. If contrariwiſe, our diſpoſitions be rude and groſs, not endued with any kind of Letters or good Learning, to aſſiſt and help them withal, with every light Conflict or Aſſault of our Natural Inclination, we run headlong into all kind of Errors and Vice. For we ought

ought first to know and understand, that neither the Stars, nor any Natural Influences do provoke or force us to any thing, but only make us apt and prone: And being so disposed, do, as it were, allure and draw us forward to our Natural Inclination. This might be illustrated by example of the *Cylinder*-Stone; which by nature being apt to roll and tumble, and being cast or thrown down into hollow or steep places, doth run without ceasing, not so much because it is cast or thrown, as for his own Nature or Aptness thereunto, and not having any thing in it self to withstand the same.

Yet have I Wartes marke upon my face
And also in another priuie place.

It seems our *Venus* had been at her *Lemnian* Forge; she had got some Marks of her Trade, which she meant to carry with her to her Grave. She confesseth, she never loved with Discretion; for in the whole course of her Trade she never made any distinction. Her Appetite was equally eager to all proper promising persons, were they of what Rank or Fashion soever. The black

was

was admitted as well as the white, the poor as the rich: Her Fort gave way to all Aſſailants.

What ſhould I ſay? but at the moneths end
This joly clerk Jenken, that was ſo hend
Hath wedded me with great ſolempnite
And to him yave I all the londe and fee----

She had paſt her mourning Month, and now comes in her hony Month, where *Jenkin* is become owner both of her ſelf and her ſtate. What was given her by Age, ſhe as freely beſtows upon Youth. Grants of her Lands, Keys of her Cheſts, all her goods movable and immovable, perſonal and real, are at his ſervice, without any eviction, moleſtation, or incumbrance ſoever. But no ſooner reſtrains he her of her Range, then ſhe repents her of her Gift. Gladly would ſhe have him re-convey it to her, but though he be a meer Scholar, he is no ſuch Gooſelin. Now the Reaſon why ſhe repents her of what was conferred by her, was this; He begun not only to reſtrain her, but chaſtiſe her.

By

By God he ſmote me ones with his fiſt
For that I rent out of his booke a leſe
That of that ſtroke, my eres wer defe.

As if ſhe ſhould thus ſay, Who would have thought that this ſmooth-chinn'd Princock, but new-come from Schole, ſhould thus begin to ſcourge me, who have had the Schooling and Scourging of four antient Benchers? Admit I rent a Leaf out of his Book, when the Story did diſcontent me, muſt he preſently fall to his Rubber of Cuffs, and ſo be reveng'd on me? Well, though this quaint Clerk fell aboard ſo roughly with me; I think I gave him his Pennyworths; Judge you that hear me. Never was Lioneſs more fierce, nor Jay more jangling. Though he labour'd to reſtrain me, in deſpite of him I took my Liberty. From houſe to houſe went I Goſſipping. Neither his Oaths nor Anger could wean me from mine humor.

For which full oft time would he preache
And me of old Roman jeſtes teache.

He ply'd me with Lectures out of old *Roman* Stories for his own purpoſe: Amongſt which,

which, he told me, how one *Sulpitius Gallus* utterly forſook his Wife, for ſhewing her ſelf but once openly at the Door, and taking a view of Paſſengers as they went by. Alſo, how another *Roman* (*Novellus Torquatus*; or I miſtake it) wholly relinquiſh'd his Wife, for making reſort to a Summer Game without his Knowledg. And how *Plutarch* (whoſe Authority might more properly be alledged in this Argument) affirmeth that it is a Cuſtom in *Egypt*, that Women ſhould wear no Shoes, becauſe they ſhould abide at home. Then would he confirm theſe antient Stories with Holy Writ, and ſhew how *Eccleſiaſt.* gives expreſs Charge to all Husbands, that they ſhould in no wiſe ſuffer their Wives to wander or ſtray abroad; knitting up his goodly Precepts and Examples with this ſhrewd Proverb;

Whoſo buildeth his hous all of ſalowes
And pricketh his blind hors ouer the ſalowes
And ſuffreth his wife for to ſeche hallowes
He is worthy to be honged on the gallowes.

Sallows

Sallows are but mean Timber-wood to build on; Fallows are uneven grounds for a blind Horſe to ride on: And Hallows or Pilgrimages dangerous Waies for young Wives to go on. The firſt ſhews Improvidence, the ſecond Raſhneſs, the laſt Weakneſs*.

* Conventicles are Tickle places for Holy Sisters; Thoſe are Booths for ſuch Ware, as I could wiſh all young Bridegrooms to beware of: St. ——— is rather a Sanctuary for our Aunts than Saints. A place reported by *Bergius* for a frequent Receipt of Pilgrims: *Pomarius* in his *Summanian Annals.*

But all for nought, I ſet nat an hawe
Of his proverbes, ne of his old ſawe
Ne I would not of him corrected be
I hate him that my vices telleth me.

But all theſe goodly Precepts and Proverbs which he delivered in this ſort unto me, were but as if he had ſown Duſt in the Air. I valued them not worth the Bloom of a Haw-thorn. For truth was, thoſe who either corrected me, or reproved thoſe Vices which they ſaw in me, were never after Cater-coſins with me; for ſuch Vices as we love, we defend; nor can we eaſily forgo them without Diſtaſt.

Now woll I ſaie you ſoth by S. Thomas
Why that I rent out of his booke a leſe
For which he ſmote me, that I was deſe.

The Book out of which I tore this Leaf, was entitled *Valerius Max.* a *Roman* Author, one who wrote much to our Reproof and Diſhonour. With him had he joyned *Theophraſtus*, at whoſe Conceipts, he unmeaſurably laughed, while I at his Laughter was grievouſly netled. With theſe had he bound up St. *Jerom's* Book againſt the Heretick *Jovinian*, together with *Tortulanus*, *Criſippus*, *Tortula*, and *Helowis*, ſometimes Abbeſs not far from *Paris*. And with theſe (to enlarge this his Miſcellane Volume) had he bound together the Parables of *Solomon*, *Ovid* his Art of Loving, with ſundry other Tracts or Treatiſes, diſcourſing of ſeveral Subjects. Now, would you know how he employed theſe Books? It was his accuſtomed manner every night when he had Leiſure, to recreate himſelf in theſe Works: More Legends and Lives

Lives had he of wicked Wives, than ye could repeat of good Wives throughout the Bible. All these had he purposely compiled, and were by him nightly recounted to make me discontented.

For truelich well, it is an impossible
That any clerke would speake good of wives
But if it been of holy saiuctes lives---

It is not now as it was in *Chaucer's* daies; Present times have Clarks, who can approve and love this Sex. Such, I say, as having proper Liniments to woo with, natural Habiliments to win with, Canonical Faculties of their own to wed with, become no Reprovers, but Improvers of so Honourable a State. Wherein I hold them wise; Sure I am, they trace the steps of the wise: For all the Seven wise men of *Greece* were married: Albeit; there never wanted in any Age scornful Inveighers against women, yea, and Persecuters of them too in publick Theatres; Such were *Euripides*, *Hesiodus*, with many others, who out of some bitter Experience had of their own unhappy Choice, made that Sex, now and then, the

Subject of their Invection. It was a Stoick's Saying, No wise man was fit for a Woman, yet may a Woman be fit for a wise man; yea, and fit him too a Penniworth for all his Wisdom. But if a Woman would have Hearts-ease, and world at will, let her marry one of our Sedentary-Desk Clarks, or Pedantical Fools, who know not what the world means; for so may she have the world at will. Now in the very last Verse mentioned by our Poet, this good wife of *Bath* shadows out such jealous Clarks; who, when they suspect their Wives affected to Company, or any way addicted to Liberty, they will pull out some antient Story or other, discoursing of the Lives of Saintly or Holy Women, to reclaim them from their Gadding, and restrain them in their Freedom of living.

Ne of none other woman never the mo
Who peinteth the Lion, tell me who?
By God, if women had written stories
As clerkes han, within her oratories &c.

These Clarks (saith she) are of that condition as they will neither speak well of Wives nor any other Women. But they

can

can paint a Lion that never saw his Feature, but by Report; This is but only as it pleaseth the Painter. Had women written Stories (as our *Theano*, with many moe Mirrors of our Sex could have done) they would have found Colours to display the vitious Natures of men, and discovered them guilty of more Enormities than the Issue-Male of *Adam* should ever redress.

The children of Mercury and Venus Been in her working full contrarious.

A Contrariety there is in the workings of *Mercury* and *Venus*. The Objects at which they aim their several Faculties, are wholly opposite. *Mercury* is for Wisdom and Speculation; *Venus* for Riot and Sensual Meetings. Yea, their Dispositions are likewise divers; for, Exaltation of the one is the Humiliation of the other; which (as if this good-wife had been well read in an *Ens-Pater*, or some other Astronomical Author) she confirms with this Instance;

And thus God wote, Mercury is deſolate
In Piſces, where Venus is exaltate
And Venus falleth where Mercury is reiſed
Therefore no woman of no clerke is preiſed.

Mercury and *Venus* are ever in Oppoſition.

For true it is, Employment hath no time
To offer Sacrifice to Venus Shrine.

Elegantly ſhadowed by *Lucian*, feigning *Cupid's* Encounter with the Muſes: "For "he that converſeth with his Mind, by "whoſe Eye the Body is directed, will not "intermit his Affairs, to have his Mind "with Luſt infected. *Mercury* admits him-"ſelf no time to take a Turn in *Venus* "Walk.

The clerke whan he is old, and may nought do
Of Venus werkes, not worth his old ſho.

Long Study hath brought him to the *Sciatica.*

atica. He hath ſo inur'd himſelf to the Speculative Part, as he is wholly out of uſe with the Practick. The Remainder of his daies (ſaith ſhe) he ſpends like a Cricket, in a Chimney-Corner, in deſcanting on the Lightneſs of VVomens Natures, wherein he ſhews the poorneſs of his own Humor.

But now to purpoſe, why I told thee
That I was beaten for a booke parde
Upon a night Jenkin, that was our fire
Redde upon his booke, as he ſate by the fire
Of Eve firſt &c.

But would you know (quoth ſhe) more at large the cauſe of my Beating? I will now return to my Purpoſe, and fully relate to you the Occaſion. Sir *Jenkin* (as he accuſtomably uſed) having laid his Heel on the Ratting Crook, to paſs the Winter-night away, or rather, as I expounded it, to diſquiet me, took a Book in his Hand, (a various Volume of Numerous Authors) wherein he read of *Eve* firſt, how ſhe by conſenting to the Serpent, brought all Mankind to the Brink of Perdition. Which mortal Sore requir'd a Soveraign Salve,

even the Blood of the Lamb, which regained Man, before loſt, and reſtored our Blood, before corrupted.

Lo here expreſſe of women may ye find
That woman was the loſſe of all mankind.

Jenkin applies the Text he had read; but few or none of all his She-Audience will vouchſafe to make Uſe of his Application. But to the end he may work ſtronger upon his Wives Phantaſie, he brings on a freſh Army of Examples in this kind. What did treacherous *Dalilah* to her *Sampſon*, when by diſcovery of his Counſel, ſhe robb'd him of his Hairs, wherein lay all his Strength; and after, of his Eyes, which gave him all his Light? What did *Deianira* to her *Hercules*, when with *Neſſus* poyſoned Shirt, ſhe ſet him all a fire? VVhat did *Zantippe* to *Socrates*, when ſhe crown'd him with a Chamber-pot? which ſhameleſs Abuſe of hers, when ſuch as were his Friends, wiſhed him to revenge, he waſhed off his Diſgrace with this Patient Anſwer:

It never yet was deem'd a Wonder
To think that Rain ſhould follow Thunder.

She thundred ſo much before with her Tongue, as he could expect no leſs than Rain. What did *Paſiphae* Wife to *Minos* of *Crete*, whoſe Britiſh Luſt, and Monſtrous Birth, have made her infamous to all ſucceeding times? What did *Clytemneſtra* to her *Agamemnon*? What Diſhonour did ſhe to her Noble Parents *Tindarus* and *Leda*, when ſhe not only expos'd her ſelf to *Ægiſtus* Luſt, but depriv'd her Princely Huſband of Life? What did *Eriphyle* Wife of *Amphiaraus*, when for a Gold-Chain, ſhe diſloyally betrayed her Husband *Polynices*, when he had hidden himſelf, becauſe he would not go to the Wars of *Thebes*? What Diſpatch made *Livia* of her Husband, becauſe ſhe lov'd him too little? What Diſpatch made *Lucilia* of hers, becauſe ſhe loved him too much? What Anſwer received *Latumerus* of *Arrius* (a Philoſopher in *Alexandria*, in *Auguſtus* time) when he made his ſorrowful Complaint unto him, how that he had a Tree in his Garden of ſuch a ſtrange Nature, as all his three wives, through

through meer deſpight, had hang'd themſelves on it? O (quoth ſurly *Arrius*) do me the Courteſie, Dear Brother, to give me a Plant of that Bleſſed Tree, that it may grow and proſper in my Garden: For never did any yet plant it, that might make better uſe of it. What Wives in theſe later times do we now read of, who not only conſented to ſee their Husbands murdered, but in the very Preſence of thoſe diſlaughtered Corps ſuffered themſelves to be defiled? Some have driven Nails through their Brains; Others have depriv'd them of Life by poyſonous Potions: As might be inſtanced in the Tragick Examples of *Druſilla*, *Fauſtina*, *Corombona*, *Meſſalina*, and many others. All which Stories Sir *Jenkin* would read ſo diſtinctly, paſſionately, and devoutly, as if they were his Evening Orizons.

And therewithall he knew no proverbes Than in this world there groweth graſſe or herbes.

He was a moſt proper Proverbial *Jenkin*, and could twit his teſty Wife with ſtore of ſuch Proverbs as theſe, which he had at his

his Finger end. "It is better to live with "Lions and Dragons, than in houſe with "an angry woman. Better to abide on the "Roof ever ſmoking, than below with a "Wife ever chiding. Yea, ſo perverſe, "(ſaid he) are they in Will, ſo contrary in "Work, that they ever hate what their "Husbands love, like what they loath. "They caſt away Shame, when they caſt "off their Smock. And for their Modeſty, "this is my Opinion, To ſee Beauty accom-"panied by Chaſtity, were like a Gold Ring "in a Swine's Snout.

Who could wene, or who could ſuppoſe
The woe, that in mine hart was and pine
And when I ſaw he would never fine
To reden on this curſed booke all night
All ſodainly three leaves have I plight
Out of his booke ——

How much this Good-wife was netled with his Nightly Lectures, ſhe can hardly expreſs her ſelf, much leſs her Interpreter. Howſoever, one may eaſily collect by thoſe furious Sparks of her Paſſion which iſſue forth, that there is a dangerous Fire within. For firſt, ſhe takes a poor Revenge on his

his Book, and tears it; Then ſhe collars with him, and with a ſound blow oth' Ear, throws him down backward into the Fire. Which he, never till now inflam'd with ſuch unmanly Fury, requites with ſuch a ſtroke on her Head, as ſenſeleſs ſhe fals on the Floor. Die ſhe will needs, there's no Remedy; and the rather, as may be imagined, to make him guilty of her Death, and ſo raiſe him to the Ladder of his *Suſpended* Advancement. But coming now at laſt to her ſelf (for long had ſhe been by her ſelf) in this ſort ſhe re-aſſaies to courſe him, before ſhe leave him.

Oh, haſt thou ſlain me falſe theſe I ſaied
For my lond thus haſt thou murdred me?
Er I be dedde, yet will I ones kiſſe the.

Though ſhe approach near the Gates of Death, ſhe can open the Gate of her Teeth, and make the Poet's Obſervation true,

Wheel of a Womans Tongue is like a River,
Set it once going, it will go for ever.

Well; It ſeems, before her Departure, ſhe means to give him a ſtrange Encounter. Sirrah Thief, do you hear! You that firſt enchanted

enchanted me, and ſo raviſh'd my Love from me; you that have ſeiz'd of what was due to me: Nay, you Blood-hound, you that for my Land have thus murdered me, draw near me, let me kiſs thee, and ſo good night to all the world. It ſhall not be ſaid, but I die in Charity; So, cloſe up mine Eyes, I ſhall die preſently. This dying Salute could not chuſe but drive poor *Jenkin* into ſundry Extreams. For, thought he, ſhould ſhe die in ſpite after this manner, I ſhould make a fair End, but a worſe Face in an Halter. Gladly would he (if ſhe were not paſt hope) recover her; Down on his knees he goes, and kiſſes her; rubs and chafes her; though ſhe needed ſmall Chafing, being as hot at Stomach, as any Pepper. In the end, he reſolves to ſalute her, and if her Stomach be come down, to reconcile himſelf to her; but ſtill he fears, ſhe is either nearly dead, or wholly deaf to ſuch an Humor.

And nere he came, and kneled faire adoun
And saied, dere suster, sweete Alisoun
As helpe me God I shall thee neuer smite
That I haue doen it is thy self to wite
Forgeue it me, and that I thee beseke
And yet eft sones I hit him on the cheke-

A right fair and proper Acknowledgment of his Offence; If she will but forgive him this rash and unadvis'd Assault, may he never desire any Favour, nor deserve any Love from her, nor in his greatest need receive any Succour, if ever he attempt any such presumptuous part thereafter. And yet alas (saith he) it was your Fault that we fell into this Debate: Had you rul'd your Tongue, I had held mine Hand; yet forgive it me, dear Sister, sweet *Alyson*, and I promise you, upon *Jenkin's* Honesty, that your Tongue shall never force me to like Fury. While poor *Jenkin* is thus labouring in all humble manner to compose his own Peace, the dead Coarse revives, and fetcheth him such an overthwart Blow, as his Head rings again. Which (good man) sounds

ſounds better in his Ear, than ever any of her ſweet Kiſſes reliſhed his Lip; For, thought he, if ſhe have ſuch lightneſs in her Fingers, ſhe cannot but have ſome Livelineſs at her Heart.

And ſaied: theſe, thus much am I bewreke
Now woll I die, I may no lenger ſpeke.

Like the humorous Lady in the Comedy, ſhe is every foot dying, to make him the more deſpairing; Though ſhe had already wreaked her ſelf of him ſufficiently, yet will ſhe die with this Revenge, in ſpite of all his Remorſe. And to confirm, that ſhe is near Death, ſhe concludes, "I may no longer "ſpeak: A dangerous Sign that ſhe is paſt all hope of Recovery. For when a woman is laid ſpeechleſs, the Bell may well ring out. But ſee what a bright Beam darted forth of this black Cloud!

—At last, with mikell care and wo
We fell accorded within our seluen two
He yaf me all the bridell in mine hond
To haue the gouernaunce of hous & lond
And of his tongue and of his hond also
And made hem brenne his book anon tho.

The world is well amended with Dame *Alyson*; She was even now for giving up the Ghost; but holding it far better, upon some reasonable tearms, to live than die, she is content to take heart of Grease, and live a while longer; Provided, she may have the Bridle in her own hand, the Government of his Estate, the Command of his Tongue and hand; and lastly, that she may burn this Apocryphal Book, which bred all this Variance and Debate: To all which he accords, and so the Peace is made. A very beneficial Peace for *Jenkin*, albeit upon hard Tearms: For by this means, became all Occasions of future Difference prevented, a shrewd Dame to a peaceable Wife changed. And to HER no less useful, being for term of life, of all his Estate without any Compartner, absolutely seized. Never from that time did any Wife from *Denmark*

mark to *India* (to take her own Compass) live with Husband in more Unity, nor shew truer Arguments of Constancy, than she did to her *Jenkin*, , and all this without Hypocrisie.

—And so was he to me
I pray to God, that sitte in Maiestie
To blisse his soule, for his mercy dere
Now woll I say my tale if ye woll here.

One True-Love Knot betwixt them both: So faithful was his Love to her till the End, as she cannot chuse but remember his Soul in her Prayers after his End. After which Orizon, she makes ready to tell her Tale.

The Frere lough whan he had heard all this
Now dame (qd he) so haue I joy or blis
This is a long preamble of a tale.

The Frier, amongst others of her attentive Audience, starts up, and jeers this good Wife of *Bath*, for making so long a Preamble to her Tale, which, for ought that he knew, might prove as short; and so resemble the *Mindian* Building, who, for making large Gates to a little City, were scorn-

fully adviſed by that Cynick *Diogenes*, to be very circumſpect and wary leſt their City ſhould run out at their Gates.

And whan the Sompner herd the frere gale
Lo (qd this Sompner) by Goddes armes two
A Frere woll entermete him euermo
Lo good men, a Flie and eke a Frere
Woll fall in euery diſh and eke matere.

In defence of her, and oppoſition to the Frier, up ſtands the Sumner; who reproves the Frier for interrupting this Good-wife in her Tale; as if he ſhould ſay, Marry Duck Sir Frier, Muſt you be ever intermedling in others Affairs? You will have an Oar, I ſee, in every one's Boat: and make that old Proverb good: *A Fly and a Frier will fall in every man's Diſh and Matter.* What have you, Sir Frier, to do with her Preambulations? Whether ſhe amble or trot it concerns you nothing. You hinder our Sport; Sit down, and give her way.

Ye wolt thou so sir Sompner (qd the Frere)
Now by my fay I shall, or er I go
Tell of a Sompner such a tale or two
That all the folke shall laugh in this place.

What, Sir Sumner, are you so malapert? Must you controul a Frier? Well! For your grave Reproof, I shall, before we part, tell a Tale or two of a Sumner, that will give Occasion enough of Laughter.

Now els Frere I beshrew thy face
(Quod this Sompner) and I beshrew me
But if I tell tales two or three
Of Freres ——

The Sumner will not abate the Frier an Ace. He has a Tale or two to bestow on the Frier, and to fit him with his own Cool, before they come to *Sittingbourn*, towards which they were journeying. He sees his Patience already netled, and he hopes, when it comes to his Turn to tell his Tale, the Frier will not find himself much refreshed.

Our hoſt cried peace ——

Like a peaceable Moderator, our Hoſt, who was the very firſt Mover and Contriver of this Task, cries Peace. Let the woman go on (quoth he) with her Tale; How is it, that you fare as if you were drunk? You trouble us; Revenge your Diſtaſts on one another in your Tales, when your time comes; If you prepare, we ſhall hear. Then turning himſelf to this Wife of *Bath*, he perſuades her to go on, in theſe words;

Doe dame, tell forth your tale, and that is beſt
All redy ſir (qd ſhe) right as you leſt
If I haue licence of this worthy Frere
Yes dame, tell forth your tale, I woll it here.

Go to Dame, let not their jarring trouble you. You know what you have to do; I hold it beſt, that you go on with your Tale. I am ready (ſaith ſhe) to obey your will, provided that I may have this worthy Frier's Leave, whoſe Patience I have ſo far abus'd with my long Preface; which, although it ſolace not him, it gave me that Delight,

Delight, as I could have travell'd farther in this Discourse, and never been tired. At last, with the Frier's Permission, and Promise of Attention, she goes on with her Tale, in this sort.

A Comment upon the Wife of Bathes Tale.

N the old dates of king Artour
(Of which the Bretons speken great honour —

Prince *Arthur*, the Son of *Uther*, born in *Cornwal*, was Crowned King of *Britain* in the Year 516. He was a Prince, for Spirit no less Couragious, than in all his Attempts Victorious. His Courage proclaimed him a man, and his good Fortune an happy man. He fought twelve several Battels against the *Saxons*, and al-

waies returned Conqueror. And having now to his ſucceeding memory reduced his Countrey to quietneſs, and planted the Peaceful Olive in his Confines; to expreſs his true Love to Chivalry, and memorize ſuch who were not only Aſſociates, but Aſſiſtants in his Victory; He conſtituted the Order of the Round Table, in which Order, he only retained ſuch of his Nobility, as were moſt Renowned for Vertue and Chivalry. This Round Table he kept in divers places, eſpecially at *Carlion*, *Wincheſter*, and *Camalet* in *Somerſetſhire*. In memory of which Foundation, by the Teſtimony of *Leyland*, there is yet to be ſeen in *Denbighſhire*, in the Pariſh of *Llanſavan*, in the ſide of a Stony Hill, a place artificially compos'd, wherein be four and twenty Seats for men to ſit in, ſome leſs, and ſome bigger, according to their ſeveral Statures; cut out of the main Rock by man's Hand; where young people coming to ſeek their Cattel, uſe to ſit, play, and repoſe: They commonly call it *Arthur*'s Round Table. To inſiſt on thoſe Fabulous Relations which former times have broached touching this Prince, I will not, but refer them, who take

take delight in the Report of ſuch Wonders, to our Old Wives Legends. Let it ſuffice them, that in this King's daies (if they will take the word of a good Old Wife of *Bath*)

All was this lond fulfilled of fairy
The Elfe quene, with her joly com-
pany &c.

King *Oberon*, Queen *Mab*, Prince *Cricket*, and his Paramour *Pig-Widgeon*, with all their fair Company, uſed to repair hither, and dance a Cinque-pace upon the Meads, (if they had ſo much Art among them.) Yea, by uſual reſorting and conſorting together, they became ſo familiar with our Milk-maids on the Downs, as they would not only ſport with them, but woo them and win them; whence the Poet:

Pug *wooed* Jug, *a wily Cub*,
To drink with him a Sillibub,
Which drunk, they ſo familiar grew,
As Jug *became one of the Crew*.

But this (ſaith our Wife of *Bath*) was many hundred Years ago. King *Oberon's* Race is quite extinct and gone, or elſe con-

fin'd to ſome other remote Iſland, where they reſide. And ſhe gives a Reaſon of this.

For there as wont to walk was an Elfe
There walketh now the limitour himſelfe.

* Limitors and holy Friers ſupply the Place of Fairies. Their Orizons, Anthems and Prayers have conjur'd down all Fayries. Before times, young Wenches durſt not ſafely go by themſelves; Every Buſh had his Hob-thruſh, but the world is well amended.

* *A Proprias Limites Terris imponendo, & removentibus Anathemata denunciando dicti, ut vereſimile eſt.*

Women may go ſafely vp and doun
In euery buſh, and vnder euery tre
There nis no other incubus but he.

Safe and ſecure may now our Maids be. No *Incubus*, Goblin, or Night-mare ſhroud themſelves in the Buſhy Thickets to ſurprize them, or with a cold Sweat in the Night-times to oppreſs them: The devout Frier hath ſcar'd them. There is no other *Incubus* but

but he. Neither need they fear any Diſhonour; for nothing but holy Honeſty attends the Frier.

And ſo fell it, that this king Artour Had in his houſe a luſty bacheler.

Amongſt others of his Princely Retinue, for whom only this brave Victorious Prince reſerved his *Round Table*, one Luſty Youth there was in his Court, who giving Reins to his Deſire, encountred a young amorous Maid, and raviſh'd her; The Report of this Rape within few daies came to King *Arthur's* Ear, who, to expiate the Guilt of ſo foul a Crime, and free his Royal Court of all Diſhonour, denounced upon this wanton Courtier due Cenſure: Which Cenſure (as may be probably conceived) was grounded upon the Statute then, as now in Force; That he who committed any Rape ſhould ſuffer Death. Albeit, in thoſe daies, an eſpecial kind of Death was inflicted on the Raviſher, and that was, he ſhould loſe his Head; to counterpoize this Offence, in depriving another of her Maiden-head.

But that the Quene, and other ladies mo
So long prayden the king of grace
Till he his life graunted in that place
And yaue him to the quene ——

As it hath been ever accounted the higheſt Honour for Knights to afford ſuccour and relief to diſtreſſed Ladies, ſo hath it been the cuſtom of Noble and Affable Ladies to commiſerate the Miſs-fortunes or Overtures of dejected Knights. Such Favour found this young Gentleman at the Hands of his Queen and her Ladies: who, no ſooner heard of this Judgment of Death pronounced upon him, than with Prayers and Tears (prevalent Suitors to a compaſſionate Prince) they labour'd to reverſe that Sentence, and afford ſome comfort to his approaching Ruine. As they pray'd, ſo they prevail'd; The King (a Mirror in his time, both for Juſtice and Mercy) gives this Knight's Life to his Queen, to diſpoſe of, as ſhall beſt like her. Nor need he fear ought elſe than a gracious Uſage at her Hands, from whoſe Sollicitancy he had received his Reprieve, if not Reverſal of Judgment.

The

The quene thanketh the knig with all her might
And after this, thus ſpake ſhe to the knight &c.

The Queen, after due thanks rendered unto the King, for ſpeeding ſo well in her Suit, takes Opportunity to talk with this Knight; and tels him how, indeed, by her means, ſhe had procur'd his Reprieve for a time; but yet he was not to hold himſelf ſafe nor ſecure from danger. His Life was given her, and ſhe would beſtow it on him, provided that he performed what ſhe propounded, and aſſoiled what ſhe demanded.

I graunt thee thy life, if that thou canſt tell me
What thing is it, that women moſt deſiren
Beware, and kepe thy necke bone from the iren.

A neceſſary Caution for this condemned Gentleman. As if ſhe ſhould ſay, Go to Sir, your Fact was hainous, for which you have here your Sentence. The Sentence of Death, you know, to be already pronounced; to attemper

attemper the ſharpneſs of which Cenſure, I have interceded for you; and ſo far prevailed, as it is now in my hands whether you live or die. Nor is my Breſt ſo ſteeled, as altogether inſenſible of Compaſſion. Yet muſt ſuch a Crime as you have committed, ſuſtain the difficulty of ſome Task before it be remitted. This Queſtion then you muſt reſolve me, if ever you mean to expect any Favour from me. It concerns our Sex, as from our Sex you are to acknowledg the Benefit of your Life.

And if thou canſt not tell it me anon
Yet woll I yeue the leue for to gon
A twelue month and a day, to ſeke and lere
An anſwere ſufficient in this matere.

If the Queſtion ſeem too intricate, I will give you a twelve-moneths time to conſider of it; yet with Sureties for your Return at the Years end. Go to, this is all the Favour I will ſhew you.

Tho was the knight, and ſorowfully he ſiketh.

Mightily perplexed was this diſtreſſed Knight;

Knight; but seeing there is no Remedy, but he must either assoil this Question, or despair of Safety; he prepares himself for his Journey. Wherein, you may suppose, what Coasts he frequents, with what people of all Qualities and Conditions he consorts; he leaves no place unsought, where he conceives the least hope that this Question may be assoil'd.

But he ne couth ariuen in no coſt
Where as he might find in this matere
Two creatures accoꝛding yfere.

As many Men so many Minds. A whole College of Physicians had not more different Opinions; Nor all the antient Philosophers more discrepant Tenets concerning Felicity. Some said it was Riches that did most delight them. Others thought Honours did most content them. Others held that Gorgeous Attire did highliest take them. Some said Mirth, others said Delight in Bed, others to be Widows oft. Some, and those of the self-same Sex (for who knows better their hearts than themselves) taking compassion of this poor perplexed Knight, and desirous to satisfie him in what they could,

unri-

unriveted the very Secrets of their own Breſts, and told him plainly what of all things in the world they for their parts moſt deſired, and what of all others moſt contented them. For my part, ſaid one, there is nought that delights me more, than to have Hearts-eaſe, to be cheared, cheriſhed, flattered and pleas'd; ever to have my Words ſeconded, my Arguments maintained, and in all my Buſineſs to have my ſelf duly attended. Another of the ſame Sex, and for her Opinion, by all likelihood of the ſame Sect, ſtarts up, and affirms; That for her part, ſhe lov'd nothing better, than to be free and at her own Diſpoſe; to be countermanded by none, to do what ſhe liſt; not to be reproved for any Vice that ſhe loved; to be eſteemed wiſe; more free than nice; more buxom than preciſe.

For trewly there nis none of us all
If any wight woll clawe us on the gall
That we nill kike ——

Here this Good-wife of *Bath* puts in her Vye, and confirms their Opinion, who held that nothing delighted a Woman more than

to

to be ſoothed, ſeconded, and humored. For whoſoever (ſaith ſhe) uſe to claw us on the Gall, or nettle us, they ſhall find us to have Stomachs. We cannot endure to be controlled; give us the Swinge, or they that oppoſe us, are ſure to be ſwinged. Again, If we be ſubject to any Vice, we cannot brook that any other's Eye ſhould prie into our Boſoms. When we are lighteſt, we deſire to be held demureſt; when moſt Vitious, to be reputed moſt Vertuous. They are lov'd moſt by us, who defend our Vices; They offend us moſt, who ſtile not our Vices Vertues.

And ſome men ſain, that grete delite haue we
For to ben holde ſtable and eke ſecre
And in one purpoſe ſtedfaſtly to dwell
And not bewray thing that men vs tell.

Here ſhe proceeds in the Delivery of their ſeveral Opinions; when ſhe ſhews, how ſome held it their higheſt Delight to be eſteemed conſtant in their Courſes, ſecret in their Counſels; to hold their firſt purpoſe immutably, and to conceal whatſoever was recommended to their Secrecy.

But

But how lightly (ſaith ſhe) we of our Sex ſet by keeping of Counſel, that Fable of * *Midas*, reported by *Ovid*, will ſufficiently diſcover.

Bacchus Bounty ſo freely beſtowed, waa not ſo diſcreetly employed by *Midas*, as *Neptune's* Gifts were by *Theſeus*: This brought *Midas* to the Brink of Miſery: Thoſe wroughte *Theſeus* ſafe Delivery.

——Woll ye here the tale?
Ouide, among other things ſmall
Said, Midas had vnder his long hæres
Growing on his heed, two aſſes eares.

Mida, *quaſi* μηδὲν ἐιδῶν, becauſe his Eies were blinded or filmed with Covetouſneſs. He was King of *Phrygia*, and one of the richeſt that ever reign'd. The Poets feign, that after he had reſtored *Silenus* unto *Bacchus*, to gratifie his Courteſie, *Bacchus* promiſed him what Gift ſoever he ſhould demand; Upon which Offer, he deſired that whatſoever he touched, might be into Gold turned. By which means, the very Meat which was provided for his Repaſt, became Gold; ſo as, though he ſurfetted in Gold, he famiſh'd for Food. Well then deſerved he

he an Aſſes Ears for his Labour, who could not ſatisfie his Deſires without ſtarving Nature. Now to cover this Deformity (as may be ſuppoſed) he wore purpoſely long Hair, ſo as none knew of it, ſave only his Wife, whom he eſpecially truſted, and to whoſe Secrecy thoſe long Ears of his were only diſcloſed. She, who had ſolemnly vow'd never to diſcloſe what he had recommended to her Truſt; both to keep her Oath, and yet diſgorge her Stomach of that Secret, which lay ſo fretting and frying on her, as ſhe muſt needs be delivered of it; reſolved one day to go down to a Mariſh near adjoyning, far remote from the ſight or ſearch of man; where, juſt like as a Bittern puts his Beak in a Reed, and through the hollowneſs of the Cane makes a ſhrill and ſharp ſound, ſo lay *Midas* Wife with her Mouth to the Water, uſing theſe Words; *Doſt thou hear, thou Mariſh? my Husband has a pair of Aſſe's Ears; This is a Secret, none but my ſelf knows of it; I would not for a world impart it. So, now my Heart is eaſed: My Lace would have broke, if I had not diſclos'd it.*

The remnaunt of the tale, if ye will here Redeth Ouide, and there ye may it lere.

This Story you may read in the Eleventh Book of his *Metamorphosis*, where the Reason of this Transformation is lively expressed.

This knight, of which my tale is specially
Whan that he sawe, he might not come thereby
This is to say, what women louen most
Within his herte sorowful was his goste, &c.

Many Coasts and Countries had this distressed Knight search'd, sundry Folkes Judgments and Opinions had he sought, yet is he no nearer, than when he began. Different were their Conceits, according to the Difference of their Minds. Nothing was definitely concluded, because their Judgments were so diversly distracted. On draws the time, in which his Summons cals him home; which, rather than he will not keep, in regard of those dear Friends Words engaged for him, he resolves to suffer a thousand

ſand Deaths. Thus perplexed, wanders this Pilgrim Knight, hopeleſs of any Reſolve for his Queſtion, and conſequently out of all hope to procure his Pardon.

But home he goth, he might not ſoiourne
The day was come, he muſt home re-
turne
And in his way, it hapned him to ride
In all his care, under a foreſt ſide
Where he ſaw upon a daunce go
Of ladies foure and twenty, and yet
mo &c.

Amidſt theſe diſtracted Cares of his, as he travels homeward (for approached was the time of his Return, with a general Expectance of his Reſolve) as he caſts his troubled Eye aſide, he ſees a Company of dainty and delicate Ladies, Sylvanes or Wood-Nymphs all, leading a pleaſant Dance near to the Forreſt ſide; Towards them he addreſſeth his Courſe, in hope to receive ſome Comfort from them. But to increaſe his Anguiſh, no ſooner draws he near them, than they vaniſh.

No creature ſaw he that bare life
Saue in the grene, he ſaw ſitting an old wife
A fouler wight there may no man deuiſe.

Beauty was gone, and Deformity left. All thoſe amiable Ladies were quite vaniſhed; and none remaining but an old Hag, whoſe ſight begot in him more Loathing than Loving. Thoſe, whom former times have painted out for the moſt ugly, and worſt-favoured Creatures that ever breathed; even *Nays*, *Cataſtes*, *Theſtylis*, were dainty Paragons in Nature *.

* This Mother-Midnight, ſhap'd like a *Swcden* Hag, and by all likelihood the Fayries Midwife.

Againſt the knight the old wife gan ariſe.

A proper Salute, and as mannerly a Regreet, you may expect, as an old Trot of her ſhape could afford. For thus ſhe ſeems to accoſt him: 'God may you bleſs, young 'Gentleman; for you look like a bonny 'gameſom Youth. What way bound you 'ſo faſt down by this uncouth Forreſt? Sure, 'if I miſs not my Mark, you are out of your 'Aim;

'Aim; for this is no High-way; Sooth in 'God, there is ſomewhat or other, that 'gripes you by th' Heart; for your freſh 'flowry Countenance looks pale. Is it Love, 'a God's Name, or ſome like giddy thing 'that girds you?

—Tell me what ye ſeken by your fay
Peradventure it may the better be
This old folke conne much thing (qd ſhe)

We old Trots are good for ſomething. We have many fine Medicines in ſtore, that luſtier Huſſies little wot on. Read your Rede to me then boldly, you ſhall find me an honeſt old woman; And a true truſty Friend in a Corner, though ſhe be never ſo ore-ſpent by Nature, may do a Buxſom Boy a Pleaſure.

My leſe mother (qd this knight) certaine
I nam but dæd, but if that I can ſain
What thing it is, that women moſt deſire
Could ye me wiſſe, I wold quite well your hire.

His time limited is ſo ſhort, and ſo ſpeedy his Task, as it admits no Delay. He diſ-

covers unto her the reason of his Raunge in that desert and unfrequented Forrest. The Question that he is injoyned to assoil upon pain of Life, he declares unto her. Albeit small Comfort he expect from her. This he no sooner imparts, than she returns him this unexpected Answer to bring him back to himself, from this high-beat Path of his approaching Danger.

Plight me thy trouth here in my hand
(qd she)
The next thing that I require of the
Thou shalt it do, if it be in thy might
And I will tell it you, or it be night.

Dapper Youth, quoth she, this Geer is of some weight; It is a dear wade, when your Life lies upon last Stake. Well, go to; you have travell'd far, and you are never a Chip the wiser. You shall see an old Wife has some Wit. But first you must requite me, or I mean never to resolve you. Give me your Hand-Promise, that after I have told you this Question, you will grant whatsoever I shall demand of you, if it be in your power; Do not deny me, lest I leave you as I found you.

Have

Haue here my trought (qd the knight) I graunt.

Life is ſweet; he will neither deny her, nor delay her, but vows truly to perform whatſoever ſhall be injoyned by her.

Than qd ſhe, I may me well auaunt
Thy life is ſafe——

Be of good chear then. Your Life is as ſafe as mine, and ſafer too; for I have one Foot ith' Grave, as you may ſee, already. I will ſo truly reſolve it, as the Queen her-ſelf, who firſt put this Queſtion to you, ſhall before all that fair Aſſembly maintain it, that the proudeſt ſhe that wears a Kerchief on her Head, ſhall not deny it. Withdraw your ſelf into that Arbour, and I will tell you.

——Without lenger ſpeche
Tho rowned ſhe a pitel in his ere
And bad him to be glad, and haue no fere.

The precioufeſt Ear-Ring that ever he wore. What he had ſought for among ſo many Beauteous Damoſels, in ſo many frequented places, in ſuch eminent Courts;

and could never attain, he finds now in the Breſt of an old withered Hag, in a wild Forreſt, far remote from the Seat or Sight of men. Suppoſe him then, thus provided, now approaching the Court, where he is expected according to his Day limited, to return his Anſwer, where he is either to come off with Honour or Danger.

(The quene her ſelf, ſitting as a juſtiſe)
Aſſembled ben, his anſwere for to here
And afterward this knight was bode a-
pere.

A great Aſſembly of women are purpoſely come to Court to hear this Knight's Anſwer, and to give their Judgments, as may be thought, whether this Queſtion to him propoſed, were by him truly or no reſolved. A general Silence by an O Yes, thrice publickly cried, was to all Women injoyned. A Task, I grant of no ſmall difficulty, but this was, to th' end this Knight ſhould not be interrupted. The Knight, after his Appearance, and ſo free Audience, with a ſhrill Voice and ſtout Spirit, as one confident of his Anſwer, aſſoiles the Queſtion with this Reſolution:

My liege lady: generally, qd. he
Wiomen desiren to haue soueraínte
As well ouer her husbonds as her loue
And for to ben in maistry hem aboue
This is your most desire, though ye me
kill
Doth as you list, I am here at your will.

There is nothing which a woman desires more than Soveraignty; Command is her Content; Dominion her Minion; her will her Weal. This the Poet confirms:

Nor Love, nor Life, nor Liberty, nor Land,
Can please a Wench, unless she have Command.

Soveraignty is such a Pearl in her Eye, that Life is a loathing unless it be attending. Thus hath he returned his Answer; now hear what Applause it receives in this fair Fœminine Assembly.

In all the court nas there wife ne maid
Ne widow, that contraried that he said
But said, he was worthy han his life.

By general Voice and Vote he is held worthy to have his Life. Their own Bosome else would have condemned them, and

netled

netled the old rivell'd Hag, from whom he receiv'd that Answer, and who all the time had been silent, to have stirred her glib Tongue among them. Now imagine, after this Question so fully resolved, and the whole Court of Women ready to be dissolved, with what unexpected Joy this Late perplexed Knight was transported; which, (behold the Mutability of all Earthly Comforts, ever sweeter in Ambition than Fruition), was as quickly exiled, by another Occurrent which now succeedeth.

And with that word, up stert the old wife
Which that the knight fond sitting on the grene
Mercy (qd she) my soueraine lady quene.

No sooner was this Question resolved, the Knight pardoned, and all ready to depart, than up starts this old Trot, and appeals to the Queen, who sate as Chief Justice; to whom she exhibits her Petition, after that, like another *Omphada*, she had unnimbly rushed down upon her four Quarters, and in her best homely manner had done her Reverence: "Madam, I am an

"old

"old woman, and ſo muſt youngeſt here be,
"if they live to't; yet an old woman de-
"ſerves her due as well as the youngeſt:
"This gay Knight, ſimply though I ſtand
"here, was taught by me his Anſwer: for
"which he plighted me his Troth, that
"whatſoever I ſhould demand at his Hand,
"if it lay in his power, he would perform.

Before the court than pray I the ſir knight
(Quod ſhe) that thou me take unto thy wife
For well thou wotſt, that I have kept thy life.

You ſhall not ſay, Sir Knight, that I love you ill; both to ſave your Life, and procure you a Wife, is no mean Courteſie. I mean to beſtow no worſe than my ſelf on you; and many a poor Knight would be heartily glad of a worſe Choice. You know Promiſe is Debt; nor can you pay your Debt, unleſs you tender your ſelf.

If I ſay falſe, ſay nay upon thy fay.
This knight anſwerd, alas and wela-way.

She

She puts him to his Book-Oath, but he will neither take it, nor her by his good-will. He muſt now turn over a new Leaf, and act another freſh Scene of Sorrow. For, thinks he, if Life be nothing without Society, what may that Life be worth, where he muſt live with her whom he eternally loths? Thus to live were to die; yea to die were to live, rather than embrace ſuch a Life. Better thinks he, it had been by many Degrees, to have ſtood Mute, and ſubmitted himſelf to the extreameſt Cenſure, than upon ſuch hard tearms to have procur'd an Anſwer, the iſſue whereof will undo him for ever. He reſolves then to make her a fair Proffer, the Acceptance whereof, though it ſhould make him a Beggar, yet in his Conceipt infinitely happier.

Take all my good, and let my body go.
Nay qd ſhe, than I ſhewe vs both two.

As if he ſhould ſay, I confeſs freely, that I have receiv'd an incomparable Courteſie from you; being the next Means under God and my Gracious Soveraign, of preſerving my Life; Nor will I deny but I promis'd you upon the Anſwer I receiv'd from

from you, whatſoever were in my power, I would freely and without exception give you. But little did I expect that my ſelf ſhould be the Gift. Alas! You are an old Woman, and ſhould think of other matters, than ſuch youthful Marriages. For what would this beget but Jealouſie in you, Diſcontent in me, and ſome miſerable End to us both? This Diſparity in our Years, can make no true Harmony in our Affections. Age, generally is more given to the World, than the Fleſh; Accept then of my Fortunes, I lay them down at your Feet, and leave me to the wide world to raiſe me an Eſtate. I have nothing too dear for you but my ſelf; releaſe me of that, and take all. This, he thought would have prevail'd, but he is far deceiv'd; She expreſsly anſwers him, that it was not his Fortunes that could content her; No, nor all the precious Ore, Metals, nor Minerals of the whole Earth. As his own Life was by her means ſaved, ſo expects ſhe that his own Perſon ſhall recompenſe it. Set your heart then at reſt, ſaith ſhe, as you receiv'd from me the Benefit of your Life, ſo nothing will content me but being your Wife and your

My loue (qd he) nay my dampnation
Alas that any of my nation &c.

My Love, my loathing! Hanging and wedding go by deſtiny, and he holds it diſputable, whether his loſs of life or choice of ſuch a Wife, were the greater Miſery. He holds *Martial*'s opinion in his affiance to this woman.

Paula *likes me, ſo ſhall I never her,*
Becauſe ſhe's old, unleſs ſhe elder were.

He could be the better contented to marry her, if he were but perſuaded that he ſhould ſhortly become her Survivor; mean time, this is his conceipt; though he received from her the benefit of his life, yet he holds his life at too high a rate to be enthralled to her love. Neither, as he verily thinks, would this diſgrace which he ſhould thus incur, by ingaging himſelf to this unweldy Beldame, who was a very fardel of Diſeaſes, reflect only upon himſelf, but on his whole Nation: For to deſcribe her, and beſtow on her her true Character, what was ſhe, but a ſapleſs ſeer ſtock without verdure; a crawling creeping Cricket,

without

without vigour; a proportionleſs feature without favour? One, whoſe mouth like a common ſewer, was ever driveling; whoſe Noſe, like a perpetual Limbeck, was ever dropping. The *Sciatica* had taken Poſſeſſion of her Hip; the Megrim of her Head; An aged Film had quite covered her Eyes; And an inceſſant Cough taken ſeizure of her Lungs. Her Mouth was diſcharged of the Grinders; from which iſſued ſuch a Steam, as it would have put a Serjeant in mind of his Mortality. Yet muſt this proper Puſs be this Knight's dainty Bride; For howſoever he hold himſelf highly diſparaged, his Nation diſhonoured, his ſucceeding Hopes eternally daſhed;

——The end is this, that he
Conſtrained was, that nedes muſt he her wed
And taketh this old wife, and goeth to bed.

He muſt perform his Promiſe; Where women are Judges, the worſt of their Sex muſt not be wronged. Now what a comfortable Bridal this was, let them judge, who have known the miſery of a Loathed Bed.

Bed. But no Remedy in cases of such inevitable Necessity; He must put on the best Countenance he can, and learn to dissemble with the World, the bitterest of whose Discontents he hath now sufficiently tasted.

Now wolden some men say parauenture
That for my negligence, I do no cure
To tellen you the joy and the array
That at the feast was that like day.

Now some (saith this old Wife of *Bath*) will perhaps expect that I should speak of the Joy and Jollity, Feasts and Solemnity of this goodly Marriage, As first, how the Bride and Bridegroom were attired, with what Companies attended, what Dainty Cates were provided, how the Feasters were ranked, with what Musick and Melody cheared.

To the which thing answere shortly I shall
I say there was no joy ne feest at all.

They that expect any jovial Day at such a Bridal-Day, are much deceived; There was nothing there but Pouting, Louring, and Cloudy Weather; All things were out of

of temper; No Conſort could keep any Concord, when the Chief of the Feaſt were at ſuch mortal Diſcord. They that came to their Table, might be ſure to find ſtore of Foul in every Corner; Foul Looks, Foul Lips, Foul Linnen. Well may we think then;

Gzet was the ſozow the knight had in his thought
Whan he was with his wife a bedde ibzought.

He is now entring his Mount *Ætna*, or his *Caucaſus* rather; for ſhe is cold enough for any ſeaſon. A perpetual Feaver now afflicts him. Reſt he cannot, yet may ſhe reſt, and will not.

He walowęth, and turneth to and fro.
His old wife lay ſmiling euermo
And ſaid: O dere huſbonde, O benedicite
Fareth euery knight thus as ye?

While he makes his Bed his Rack, turning to and fro, toſſing and wallowing in his Sheets of Shame, for ſo he holds them, his Bed-fellow expoſtulates the Cauſe with

 him,

him, and with a comfortable Smile, as you may gather, by her amiable Favour and Feature, thus accoasts him; 'Good God, 'Dear Husband, what a tossing and turn-'ing you make! Fares every Knight with 'his Wife as you do? Is this the Comfort 'of a first Nights Marriage? Marry, Fie 'upon Wedding and this be it. Are King '*Arthur's* Knights so dainty of their Love, 'as they will tender no Benevolence to 'them from whom they receive the Benefit 'of their Life? Sure, others are neither so 'coy nor curious, so dainty nor dangerous 'of their Busses nor Embraces as you be. 'Am not *I* she, who preserved your Life 'from Danger, and since have married you, 'which deserves some Honour? How is it 'then, that like a mad man, you shew this 'Distemper, and with-hold that Freedom 'of Love from me, which you ought in du-'ty to tender? First Night had been no 'such great matter, if you had been more 'sparing of your Love hereafter.

Fy, what is my gilt? for gods loue tell me it
And it shall be amended if I may.
Amended (qd this knight) alas nay nay &c.

Sure my Guilt cannot be so great, but if you look on the Means of your Safety, that will excuse me; But if I have been in ought blame-worthy, do but impart it, and I shall amend it. Amend it (quoth the Knight) that's impossible. When I look on thy Deformity, it makes me quite forget the means of my Safety. Thy Presence makes my Bed loathsom; thy Old Age and base Birth make my Life wearisom. No wonder then, if I thus toss, turn and turmoil my self, when I see no Object that may afford to my restless Misery the least Hope of Comfort. Burst then, poor hapless Heart, since thou art destitute of all Hope, and deprived of all Means of Help.

Is this (qd she) the cause of your unrest?
Ye certainly qd he, no wonder nis.

What, saith she, is this all you can object against me? Is it my Base Parentage, or

Mean Perſonage the only Reaſon of your Diſtaſt? Yes, anſwers he, what Reaſons can be greater, when neither outward Worth, nor Equality of Birth ſuits with mine Honour?

Now ſir (qd ſhe) I couth amend all this
If that me liſt, er it were daies three
So well ye might beare you vnto me.

Well Sir, theſe are no ſuch great Eyeſores, but they might be cured; yea, and before three Daies were expired, if you demeaned your ſelf towards me as became a Loving Husband. But whereas you ſtand ſo much upon Gentility of Blood; Truſt me, ſweet Spouſe, theſe Titles are but Trifles. Thoſe only are to be held generous, who are Vertuous; thoſe Ignoble, who are Vicious. Nobility of Blood, if it want inward Worth, is ſoon corrupted; and the higheſt Family without Vertue, ſtained. It is true, we derive from our Anceſtors our Deſcents, yet if we come ſhort of them in Deſerts, we more diſhonour them, than we are honoured by them. For howſoever they confer on us their Inheritance, they cannot leave us their Goodneſs; That muſt be by our own

own Endeavours obtained, not to us Lineally derived. He is a right Gentleman, that has gentle Conditions; from whence he took his Name, as it agreed beſt with his Nature.

Wel can the wiſe poete of Florence
That hight Daunte, ſpeke in this ſentence.

Daunt, a Famous *Italian* Poet, of whom ſucceeding times have given this Approved Teſtimony;

Ingennous Daunt, *who had the Art to ſit*
His Subject to his Verſe, his Verſe to it.

He was Laureat in his Time, and of ſuch a pregnant preſent Conceipt, as he was no leſs honoured by the Eminenteſt Princes then living; who joy'd to be his *Mecœnas*: than memorized after his Death with a rich and ſumptuous Monument, with his *Effigies* to Life engraven on it.

Lo in ſuch manner rime is Dauntes tale
Ful ſelde up riſeth by his braunches ſmale
Proweſſe of man: for God of his goodneſſe
Wol that we claim of him our gentilneſſe.

Here this old Woman ſhews her ſelf graced with inward Worth, though ſhe want outward Parts, in a free Delivery of her Reading both in Poetry and Philoſophy. Wherein ſhe firſt repeats *Daunt's* Divine Sentence, how we are to attribute all glory unto God, from whom we receive not only outward Proweſs, but all inward Goodneſs. From our Elders, we may receive Fortunes and Temporal Bleſſings, which uſually prejudice moſt, where they are poſſeſs'd moſt: But for inward Abilities, it is not in their power to derive them to us, nor beſtow them on us. And he gives the Reaſon, which he confirms with a Familiar Inſtance: For, ſaith he, Should Goodneſs be derived lineally, then where there is any goodneſs in the Anceſtor, it ſhould diffuſe and propagate it ſelf to all his Family; None that deſcended from him, ſhould be addicted

addicted to any Villany: There would be an Heritage of Goodneſs in the whole Linage. Juſt as Fire, ſhould you carry it into the darkeſt Cell betwixt Heav'n and Frozen *Caucaſus*, yet would it, according to its Natural Quality and Operation, give Light and Heat; The Darkneſs of the Houſe could neither obſcure nor extinguiſh it; till what fed it were conſumed, and ſo it ſelf became quenched. But it is far otherwiſe with Gentry, it derives no ſuch Native Motion nor Operation from her Family.

For god it wot, men may full often find
A lordes ſon done ſhame and villany ——

As Baſtard-Slips take ſeldom deep Root, ſo the freeſt and moſt generous Plants bring not alwaies forth moſt Fruit. The hopefulleſt Cyens are oft-times moſt degenerate. *Catiline* and *Cethegus* were a ſhame to their Fathers; So were *Semphronia* and *Lucilla* to their Mothers. He or ſhe then (ſaith this Moral Bride) that would be accompted Generous, let him be Vertuous; He cannot be a Gentleman, that is not endowed with a Gentle Mind. Be he or ſhe never ſo nobly Deſcended, if Debauch'd, they are

but Peasants. Neither can we justly challenge to our selves any Honour from our Ancestors, if we second them not in Actions worthy the Renown of those Ancestors. It is neither Priority of Place, nor Nobility of Race, that deserves Approving, but Gentleness and Affability, which from God have their sole Beginning.

Thinketh how noble, as saith Valerius Was thilke Tullius Hostilius.

Tullus Hostilius, of whom so glorious a mention is made by *Valerius Maximus*, was the third King of the *Romans*, a Prince of Singular Sobriety, a singular Observer of all Vertues; Insomuch as his own Goodness rais'd him to that Greatness. His Poverty could not keep him from Imperial Dignity, because the Eyes of all good men were upon him; by whose general Suffrage he was elected, and to a Regal Seat advanced. Peruse likewise the Works of *Seneca* and *Boetius*, two Authors most sententiously Divine, and you shall find (saith this old Bride) that it is gentle Deeds that make one truly Gentile. By all which, she expressly concludes, that *Lib.7. C. 4.*

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an Honourable Deſcent infers not ever Eminence of Deſert; For as one may be Low-bred and well diſpos'd, ſo may one be High-born, and ill-affected.

And therefore dere huſbond, I thus conclude
Al were it that mine anceters were rude
Yet may that hie god, and ſo hope I
Graunt me grace to live vertouſly.

Surceaſe Husband, to twit me thus with Baſeneſs of Birth; Though mine Anceſtors were rude, yet if God give me Grace to be good, my Vertuous Life ſhall ennoble my low Line. Let not this therefore ſo much diſtaſt you, though my Deſcent be mean, I purpoſe to ſupply that Want by Deſerts, if that may pleaſe you.

And there as ye of pouertie me repreue
The hie God, on whom that we bileue
In wilful pouerte chefe to lede his life &c.

Secondly, Whereas you ſeem ſo much to tax me for my Poverty; That Condition is rather to be loved, than reproved. He who may be a Pattern to us all for Imitation, preferred voluntary Poverty before any other Condition.

Condition. Neither may we think would He have chus'd it, if there had been any Evil in it. The Philoſopher ſaith, To be ſilent in Proſperity, chearful in Adverſity, in both to ſhew an Indifferency, is the higheſt Pitch of Philoſophy. It is the Saying of *Sage Seneca*, and other Learned men, That he only is Proſperous and Happy, who contents himſelf with his Poverty; Admit he be not worth a Shirt to his back, he has Wealth enough, who holds himſelf content. He is the richeſt, whoſe Deſires are feweſt; He the pooreſt, whoſe Wiſhes are fulleſt. There is no Poverty but Sin properly. *Juvenal* ſpeaks merrily:

He that's ſo poor he is not worth a Groat,
Before a Thief may ſing a merry Note.

Yea, to deſcribe more fully the Excellency of Poverty; It is a Soveraign good, though generally hateful, inwardly fruitful. An expedite Diſpatcher of Buſineſs; For howſoever we pay for Expedition in theſe Courts on Earth, this is that leads us in the expediteſt Courſe to the Court of Heaven; It enlighteneth our Underſtanding, enliveneth our Conceiving, rectifieth our Judgment,

ment, if in theſe Guſts of ſeeming Affliction we be patient. Theſe, and many other excellent Fruits produceth Poverty, though few or none entertain it willingly. Nay, which is more, it brings Man to the Knowledg of himſelf, and of God, who, for his Love to Man, humbled himſelf. Beſides, It is a very clear Mirror or Looking-Glaſs, wherein he may diſtinguiſh Friends from Foes, and try whom he may ſafely truſt. Reprove me then no more (Gentle Sir) for my Poverty; nor grieve your ſelf at that which brings with it more Comfort than Miſery.

Now ſir, eke of elde ye repreued me
And certes ſir, though none autozite
Were in no boke ye gentils of honour
Saine that men ſhuld an old wight honour &c.

Laſtly Sir, Whereas you deſpiſe me for mine Age; If no Authority did enjoyn you, nor no Book inform you, that Age were to be reverenced, even your own Gentility would exact this from you, and that inbred Civility which Nature hath planted in you. When you ſee an Old Man, for the Reve-

rence

rence you bear unto his Age, you clepe him Father. Will you contemn me then, becauſe I am like your Mother? In this reſpect, you ſhould rather cheriſh, than diſcourage me, honour, than diſparage me.

Gray Hairs were once in reverence till now,
So were deep Furrows in an Aged Brow.

Believe it Sir, though * Gray Hairs be young mens Terrors, they are old mens Treaſures; Though young mens Laughter, they are old mens honours. More Experience is here ſhrouded, than Fair Looks, or Freſh Locks ever yet attained.

* *Cani Juvenum Spectra, Senum Specula; Juvenum Ludibria, Senum Decora:* Adag.

Now there as ye ſain, that I am foule and olde
Than dzede you not to ben a cokewolde.

Now whereas you ſtill caſt in my Diſh, mine Age and Deformity; This you may uſe for an Antidote againſt Jealouſie. When you are abroad, you need not fear me; Affection is grown ſo cold in me, it can work no ſtrong Effects on my Phantaſie. Neither will

will any one desire much to court me, for my Deformity. Decrepit Age and want of Beauty, are sufficient Guardians to preserve Chastity. For as Age is ever attended on by Honour, it is with more Reverence loved than lusted after.

But natheles, sin I know your delite
I shall fulfil your worldly appetite.
Chese now (qd she) one of these things twey
To haue me foule and olde, til that I dey
And be to you a trewe humble wife
And neuer you displease in all my life
Or els wol you haue me yong and faire
And take your aduenturst of the repaire
That shal come to your house, because of me
Or in some other place, may well be?

But go too Sir; I see these pleas will hardly please. The Bride that lyes by you must be beautiful or she will not content you. Beauty is a dainty Pearl in your eye. Well; you shall have your desire: There is nothing that may delight you, wherein I will not satisfie you, if it be in my power to

to grant you. Go to then, I will offer to your choice two things, wherein pleaſe your ſelf, and you ſhall pleaſe me who am your ſecond ſelf. Firſt is, whether you will have me aged and deformed as I now am; and ſo find me an humble, loving, and affable Wife, unwilling to diſpleaſe you, ready at bed and board to be diſpoſed by you, in all reſpects conformable unto you. Or elſe, you will have me young and fair, and ſubject your ſelf to the hazards of beauty. For well you know, that as youth is ſooner tempted, ſo is beauty ſooneſt tainted. I cannot avoid it but I muſt have Suitors to court me, Servants to comfort me, dainty Didappers to viſit me. Your houſe muſt be alwayes open to Strangers, mine arms to embraces, my perfum'd Lips to youthful Kiſſes.

Now cheſe your ſeluen whether that you liketh
This Knight auiſeth him, and ſoꝛe ſiketh
But at the laſt, he ſaid in manere:
My lady and my loue, and wife ſo dere
I put me in your wiſe gouernaunce
Cheſeth your ſelf, which may be moꝛe pleaſunce
And moſt honour to you and me alſo
I do no foꝛce whether of the two ——

The world is well amended; Now when it is in his choyce, he ſtands indifferent for her Change. Yet could he find in his heart that ſhe had Beauty, ſo none might ſhare with him in her Beauty. But Jealouſie is ſuch a dangerous Malady, as to prevent all occaſion, he will content himſelf with her Deformity, rather than become ſubject to ſo cureleſs an Infirmity. Firſt therefore he here adviſeth, then ſigheth, laſtly thus concludeth: Albeit, Dear Wife, you may imagine what Comfort it would be to me to enjoy a Beautiful Bed-fellow; one whoſe outward Parts might make her honoured where-ever ſhe reſorted; and whoſe ſweet Society might allay my Diſtaſts, and improve

prove my Comforts whenſoever occaſioned; yet ſhall not you find me ſo drenched or drowned in ſenſual Delights, as to prefer mine own Appetite before the Light of Reaſon. I underſtand by your grave and diſcreet Arguments, that you are wiſe, which is to be incomparably valued above all outward Beauty. Make choyce then of what may ſeem beſt in your own Diſcretion; I will in no wiſe give way to my own blind Affection; which of theſe two ſoever may tender you moſt Pleaſure and Honour, chuſe it, and ſo diſpoſe of me and it, as your Honour may be moſt advanced by it. I ſhall hold my ſelf content whether of theſe two you accept.

For as you liketh, it ſuffiſeth me.
Than haue I got of you the maſtrie (qd ſhe)
Sin I may cheſe, and gouerne as my liſt
Ye certes wife (qd he) I hold it for the beſt
Kiſſe me (qd ſhe) we be no lenger wrothe
For by my trueth, I woll be to you bothe &c.

Now

Now what ſhe ſo long aim'd at, ſhe has got; her *own Will*; and therein, which may ſeem more ſtrange, his Happineſs. You have given me, ſaith ſhe, the Maſtery; which ſhall be ſuch a Government, as it ſhall not have the leaſt taſt of Tyranny. This you have done ſo freely, as it injoins my Uſage to be friendly. Go to Sir; You ſhall hence find what Benefit an obedient and obſervant Husband may reap by reſigning his Will to the Will of his Wife: You ſtood doubtful at firſt, whether of thoſe two Offers which I made you, were to be accepted by you; That is, whether you would have me continue as I am, Aged and Deformed, but withal Conſtant, Continent, and to your Command Obedient; Or Young and Beautiful, but withal Youthful, and in danger to become Incontinent. But now I ſhall take from you all Occaſion of Doubting, and make you happy in your Affection. For I will be to you both Young and Beautiful; and withal ſo conſtant in my Love, ſo Continent in my Deſires, ſo Moderate in my Delights, ſo Temperate in my Reſolves, ſo Diſcreet in my Directions, ſo Vertuouſly Good and Gracious in all my Actions, as you

ſhall find your Happineſs fully Crowned in enjoying me. Nor will I feed your Hopes with any long Delay; For by the next Morning, ſhall my Beauty be ſuch, as no Lady from Eaſt to Weſt may compare with me; whereof, with my Life, diſpoſe as may beſt pleaſe you.

And ſo they ſlepte till it was mozow graie
And than ſhe ſaid, whan it was daie
Caſt vp the courteine, and loke how it is.
And when this knight ſaw all this
That ſhe ſo faire was and ſo yong therto
Foz joy he hent her in his armes two.

Howſoever it be ſaid, that they both ſlept; It is probably to be doubted, whether he, at leaſt, ſlept or no. Such a longing deſire he had to ſee this approaching Hour of her Tranſmutation. But when this happy Hour was approached, *Aurora* her burniſh'd Beams diſperſed, and the Curtain drawn aſide, by which this Brides Beauty might be diſcerned; it is not to be imagined how ſtrangely this over-joyed Bridegroom was intranced. Straight-waies he inwreaths her in his Arms, looks Babies in

in her Eyes; and as one embathed in Bliſs, a thouſand times a row he kiſſeth her, meerly tranſported with joy for the Beauty he ſaw in her.

Thus did they ſurſet it in midſt of Plenty,
Ten Kiſſes ſhort as one, one long as Twenty.

To treat farther of it, I will not; Modeſty would have this Subject enſkreened, & left to the Imagination to conceive it. Let it ſuffice, that as her Beauty could not chuſe but give him Content, ſo was ſhe to him conſtant and obedient: In which mutual Affection; ſeconded with perfect Joy, free from all Jar, they continued till their Lives ended.

——And Jeſu Chriſt us ſende
Huſbondes meke, yong, and freſh a bedde
And grace to ouerlive hem that we wed.
And I pray to God, to ſhort her liues
That will not be gouerned by her wiues
And olde and angry nigardes of diſpence
God ſend hem ſone a very peſtilence.

Here at laſt this good Old Wife of *Bath* ends her long Relation with a ſerious Supplication; By which ſhe ſhews that ſhe has

one Colt's Tooth yet left; Neither doth ſhe pray only for her ſelf, but for the whole Congregation of her Sex: That they may have Husbands *Meek*, to live with, *Young*, to love with, and *Freſh*, to lie with; That they may ever be their Survivors; That ſuch Husbands may have ſhort Lives, who will not ſuffer their Wives to be Governors; And that a Peſtilence may light on all ſuch Huſbands and Niggardly Cot-queans as cannot diſpoſe of their own, but are Miſers. And ſo ends ſhe her Story to make her Audience merry. Thus then will we conclude our Comment, and recount the Comical Paſſages of their Nuptial Content, woven up in theſe Verſes.

The King's appeas'd, the Queen reſts ſatisfi'd,
The Bridegroom joyes in his new-formed Bride
No Part in her appears from Top to Toe
But may give Nature thanks for making't ſo;
Inward and Outward Graces joyntly meet,
To make his Comfort in her more compleat;
Long did they live together in true Love,
While each with other in Affection ſtrove:
"May all Folk marry ſo that would live well,
"Or let them tarry, and lead Apes in Hell.

AN

An APPENDIX.

AFter *such time as the* Autor, *upon the instance of sundry Persons of Quality, had finish'd his* Comments *upon these* Two Tales; *the Perusal of them begot that Influence over the clear and weighty Judgments of the Strictest and Rigidest Censors; as their high Approvement of them induced their Importunity to the* Author *to go on with the rest, as he had successfully done with these Two first: Ingenuously protesting, that they*

they had not read any Subject diſcourſing by way of Illuſtration, *and running Deſcant on ſuch* Light, *but* Harmleſs *Fancies, more handſomly couched, nor modeſtly ſhadowed. All which, though urgently preſs'd, could make no Impreſſion on the* Author: *For his Definite Anſwer was this:* "*That his* Age, *without* "*any Appellant, might render his Apology;* "*and priviledge him from* Commenting *on* "Conceptions (*were they never ſo pregnant*) "*being interveined with Levity, Saying;*

"Of ſuch light Toyes Hee'd ta'n a long
"Adew,
"Nor did He mean his Knowledge to
"renew.

"*Neither could he entertain any ſuch thought* "*of Perfection in* theſe, *being begun and fi-* "*niſh'd in his Blooming Years; wherein the* "*Heat of Conceipt, more than the Depth of In-* "*tellect dictated to his Pen. The Remainder* "*of his Hours henceforth was to* number his "Daies: *But if* Æſon's *Herb ſhould revive* "*him, and ſtore him with a new Plumage, he* "*was perſuaded that his Youthful* Genius "*could not beſtow his Endeavour on any* Au-
"thor

"thor *with more Pleaſure nor Complacency to* "*Fancy, than the Illuſtrations of* Chaucer.

Amidſt this Diſcourſe, a Critick *ſtepping in, objected out of the Quickneſs of his Cenſure, much like that Phantaſtical Madam, who drew* Rapſodies *from her* Carpet, *that he could allow well of* Chaucer, *if his* Language *were* Better. *Whereto the* Author *of theſe Commentaries return'd him this Anſwer:* "*Sir, It appears, you prefer* Speech *before the* "Head-piece; Language *before* Invention; "*whereas Weight of Judgment has ever given* "Invention *Priority before* Language. *And* "*not to leave you diſſatisfied, As the Time* "*wherein theſe* Tales *were writ, rendered* "*him incapable of the one; So his Pregnancy* "*of Fancy approv'd him incomparable for the* "*other. Which Anſwer ſtill'd this Cenſor, and juſtified the Author; leaving* New-holme *to atteſt his Deſerts; his* Works *to perpetuate his Honour.*

FINIS.